DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 107 PS 023 019

TITLE	Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va.; West Virginia Education Association, Charleston.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	RP91002002
PUB DATE	Nov 94
NOTE	83p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., Distribution Center, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325-1348 ($5).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reference Materials - Directories/Catalogs (132)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Agencies; Agency Cooperation; Early Childhood Education; Early Intervention; Educational Cooperation; Educational Resources; *Family School Relationship; *Interschool Communication; Preschool Children; Program Effectiveness; *School Community Relationship; *School Effectiveness; *School Readiness; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Program Characteristics; West Virginia

ABSTRACT

The West Virginia Education Association and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory formed a study group to examine transition activities used in West Virginia by preschool, Head Start, kindergarten, and early intervention programs. The study group members developed a program identification form and a program description form, which were disseminated to 100 transition programs. This guide provides findings from the 24 responding programs. These findings concern demographics, program rationale, activity types, decisionmaking, staff development, communications, records transfer, resources, and accomplishments and obstacles in relation to early childhood transition activities. Developed for educators and care providers, the guide includes: an introduction with background on the work of the Early Childhood Transition Study Group, a rationale for the importance of transition practices developed from a review of related literature, a description of the methodology and findings from responses to the group's Program Description Form, and recommendations for practitioners. The following areas of difficulty for transition programs were acknowledged: (1) communicating across agencies and with families; (2) identifying and reaching out to children with limited program resources; (3) sharing records without breaching confidentiality; (4) coordinating procedures with other agencies while adhering to funding agency guidelines; (5) helping children and families visit new settings; and (6) finding time for sending and receiving program teachers to craft individually appropriate transition efforts for all children and their families. A Service Provider Directory of study respondents and a bibliography on early childhood transitions are included. Appendices contain the Early Childhood Transitions Study Group Program Identification Form, Program Description Form, a Reflections and Recommendations Form and elements and exemplary practices for home, school, and community linkages. A separately published brochure, "Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten, A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators," is attached. (AA)

ED 379 107

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change

A Joint Study by

WVEA

West Virginia Education Association

and

AEL

Appalachia Educational Laboratory

November 1994

Funded in part by the

OERI

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
Washington, D. C.

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL), Inc., works with educators in ongoing R & D-based efforts to improve education and educational opportunity. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and operates the Eisenhower Regional Math/Science Consortium for these same four states. It also operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

AEL works to improve:

- professional quality,
- curriculum and instruction,
- community support, and
- opportunity for access to quality education by all children.

Information about AEL projects, programs, and services is available by writing or calling AEL.

AEL

Post Office Box 1348
Charleston, West Virginia 25325-1348
304/347-0400
800/624-9120 (toll-free)
304/347-0487 (FAX)

Help Us Improve AEL Publications

Readers are requested to complete the product evaluation form included within and to fold, staple, and return it to AEL. Suggestions for future AEL publications are welcome.

This document is available from AEL's Distribution Center for $5.00, postage and handling included.

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RP91002002. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. Government.

AEL is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

West Virginia Education Association & AEL • November 1994

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Acknowledgments	v
Executive Summary	vii
Introduction	1
Planning and Conducting the Study	1
Purpose	2
Rationale	3
What Is Transition?	3
Why Are Transition Services Needed?	3
What Are Effective Transition Services?	4
What Are the Effects of Transition Services?	7
Legal Requirements for Early Childhood Transitions	11
Methodology and Findings	15
Methodology	15
Demographic Data	16
Transition Activities, Services, and Practices	17
Professional Development on Transition Issues	18
Communications and Gaining Support	19
Transition Readiness	19
Transfer of Records Upon Transition	20
Program Evaluation	20
Accomplishments	21
Obstacles	21
Resources	22
Recommendations	22
Service Provider Directory	25
Bibliography	32
Appendices	34
Appendix A: WVEA-AEL Early Childhood Transitions Study Group: Program Identification Form	36
Appendix B: WVEA-AEL Early Childhood Transitions Study Group: Program Description Form	38
Appendix C: WVEA-AEL Early Childhood Transitions Study Group: Reflections and Recommendations Form	42
Appendix D: Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework of Home, School, and Community Linkages—Elements and Exemplary Practices	46

"Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten, A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators" (provided with each copy of product disseminated)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) wish to thank the following educators, the WVEA-AEL Early Childhood Transitions Study Group who developed *Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change*. Their time and efforts spent in literature review, survey development and distribution, data analysis, writing, and editing are much appreciated.

Lynn Bolen, Director, Southwestern Community Action Head Start Transition Demonstration Project, Huntington

Lou Ann Fenney, Associate Director, River Valley Child Development Services, Huntington

Rose Mary Irwin, Kindergarten Teacher, Summers County Schools

Cynthia Lemon, Head Start Teacher, Kanawha County Schools

Kathy McCullough, Parent and Child Advocate, Charleston

Dee Dee Simoneau, Child Care Coordinator, River Valley Child Development Services, Huntington

Diana Startzel, Kindergarten Teacher, Boone County Schools

Carol Williams, Preschool Coordinator, Office of Special Education Programs and Assurances, West Virginia Department of Education, was actively involved in the study. She gave assistance in conceptualizing the study, nominating members, providing resource documents, disseminating Program Identification Forms, and reviewing the group's product. Also collaborating on study group formulation and member nomination were Barbara Merrill, Early Childhood Specialist, Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families and Sharon Flack, Early Childhood Specialist, West Virginia Department of Education. Carol Perroncel, Early Childhood Specialist, AEL, provided numerous resources and responses to questions throughout the group's work. The faculty and administrators of study group member schools and programs were most accommodating during study group member program visits and meetings, and were responsive to questions.

Essential to this project were those directors and staff of preschools, Head Start programs, Early Intervention (E.I.) programs, child care referral services, and kindergartens who responded to the Program Description Form and to followup questions. Their time and efforts, like those of study group members, were voluntary and their responses compose the foundation of the document. Many provided additional descriptive information beyond what was requested. Contact information for each is provided in the Service Provider Directory.

AEL works with educator associations to identify topics of interest to educators and to involve educators as members so that the resulting study group publications will be useful. As in previous WVEA-AEL study groups, the WVEA president Kayetta Meadows, a former kindergarten teacher, was helpful in conceptualizing the study, nominating members, and reviewing the final document. Additional thanks go to Dennis Giordano, WVEA executive director for reviewing the document, and to Jackie Goodwin, WVEA communications director, for assisting the study group's search for transition programs and for announcing, copying, and disseminating to members *Early Childhood Transi-*

tions: Preparing Children and Families for Change.

The final publication is enriched by the accompanying brochure, "Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten, A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators," which was published by the Head Start Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The recommendations offer sound advice in a clear and concise format for those facilitating early childhood transitions between a variety of settings. Thanks to the Bureau for providing the guide for each disseminated copy of the study group's product.

Finally, AEL staff who worked to blend the voices of many into one document, and who researched, developed, edited, rewrote, and typeset the final copy contributed greatly to the quality of this publication. The authors wish to thank the following AEL staff who contributed:

Soleil Gregg
Jane Hange
Carolyn Luzader
Carla McClure
Patricia Penn
Marsha Pritt
Sara Stricker
Karen Simon

Executive Summary

Will all children start school ready to learn in the year 2000? If the nation is to reach its first education goal by the year 2000 or later, collaboration among early childhood educators, care providers, social and health service agencies, and families will be essential. High-quality programs of developmentally appropriate care and education are necessary not only in the home, but also in external care settings, pre-school, Head Start, kindergarten and primary grades, and early care providers. These agencies and families must interact to ensure that all of society's children including those most vulnerable—the disadvantaged and developmentally delayed children—will start school on equal footing with others of their age. To help close the gap between the "have" and the "have-not" children will require examining and improving transition processes that assist all children and families as they move from preschool to medical service to social service agency—while also providing support as these children progress from early intervention to Head Start or from preschool to kindergarten.

Federal funds are now available to educators and social service programs, such as Head Start and early intervention, to establish and extend effective programs. New opportunities exist to serve eligible children who have not been identified or previously served. "Helping children should be viewed as an investment, not a cost, since failure to act surely will mean far higher payments later on in remedial education, in unemployment, in crime—in wasted lives and promises unfulfilled" (Boyer, 1992, p. 11).

With many public and private entities serving young children and continually seeking to improve their programs, the casual observer might conclude that the needs of most youngsters are being fully met. Research has concluded otherwise. Studies that have looked at the problem of transitions (i.e., Love, Logue, Trudeau, and Thayer, 1992) have shown that the dissonance created during transitions is especially difficult for children. This feeling of destabilization affects children as they bounce from care provider to care provider when changes take place in the family or when finances fluctuate and care circumstances are altered. Those who are the most significantly affected are the children in the critical growth years of birth through eight.

Children and families in West Virginia encounter the same discontinuities of care as do those in more urban areas when they face transitions. They, too, face unfamiliar surroundings and care providers, uncertain continuity in conditions that nurture development, and unlikely chances for proper assessment and communication of progress to new care providers. The rural nature of the state complicates transition since social services are often centered in the few major cities, preschools are nonexistent in the most remote areas, and Head Start and early intervention programs suffer from too few children scattered over too wide an area to make adequate service cost effective. Even with these obstacles, individuals, schools, and agencies are changing practices and policies to ensure smooth transitions for children and families.

To investigate transition activities used in West Virginia by preschools, Head Start and early intervention programs, the state's Head Start Transition Demonstration Project, and kindergartens, a study group was formed. The West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) sponsored the group of representatives of those most involved—early child-

hood care provider directors, Head Start and kindergarten teachers, and parent/child advocates. Working with the West Virginia Department of Education and the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families, WVEA and AEL identified individuals and invited their participation. Study group members and the AEL facilitator then conceptualized the study—the identification of early childhood transition activities used in representative settings in the state.

Study group members developed a Program Identification Form and Program Description Form which AEL disseminated to more than 100 "transition stakeholders" identified by collaborating Department of Education staff. Those receiving the forms included Head Start and Head Start Transition Demonstration Project directors, preschool directors, Early Intervention specialists (special needs child assistants), the state's child care director, special education representatives, parents, and others concerned with continuity between preschool and school settings for children. Reminder forms were mailed and phone interviews conducted to clarify responses, when necessary, to provide a sampling of transition activities used in early childhood settings throughout the state.

Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change presents study group findings from the 24 responding programs. These findings concern demographics, program rationale, activity types, decisionmaking, staff development, communications, records transfer, resources, and accomplishments and obstacles in relation to early childhood transition activities. A directory of early childhood service providers reporting transition activities is also included in this study as is a bibliography on early childhood transitions.

Also included are recommendations from respondents and study group members and from related research on the organization and operation of activities that provide smooth transitions for children and their families.

Respondents currently employing transition activities and study group members acknowledged difficulties of (1) communicating across agencies and with families; (2) identifying and reaching out to children with limited program resources; (3) sharing records without breaching confidentiality; (4) coordinating procedures with other agencies while adhering to funding agency guidelines; (5) helping children and families visit new settings; and (6) finding time for sending and receiving program teachers to craft individually appropriate transition efforts for all children and their families. While few programs had formal methods of evaluating the effectiveness of their transition activities, most relied on feedback from families and receiving program staff.

Respondents to the Program Description Form and study group members most frequently recommended the following:

- Communicate early and often with all parties and identify why transition is helpful to each.
- Develop working relationships with staff in receiving programs. Establish staff exchanges between programs to observe practices.
- Use a global release of information for all agencies involved.
- Hold spring and fall transition meetings or workshops to orient parents.
- Work with families to empower them to see all options (public or private school, child care, Head Start, etc.) and to make decisions that best fit their needs and the child's.
- Listen to the individual child and to the family.
- Develop a transition plan and stick to it.

Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change

This document, developed for educators and care providers, is organized into the following sections: an Introduction with background on the work of the Early Childhood Transitions Study Group, a Rationale for the importance of transition practices developed from a review of related literature, a description of the Methodology and Findings from responses to the group's Program Description Form, Recommendations for practioners, a Service Provider Directory of respondents to the study, and a Bibliography. This guide does not profess to include descriptions of all early childhood transition services in West Virginia. It provides insights from individuals currently using practices that help children and families make successful transitions between programs. To that end, it should be useful to those seeking to establish or improve connections between agencies and schools that help children.

Introduction

Planning and Conducting the Study

The path between home and school, in terms of child development, may today be much more convoluted than in the past. Frequently, children of single parents or two working parents are shuttled between relatives, two or more child care providers, clinics, and/or social service agencies during the course of a typical week. During the five-year period before a child typically enters full-day school sessions, he or she may have experienced a different child care setting as often as every few months. While children frequently seem to adjust to change perhaps more quickly and flexibly than do their parents, the number of transitions and the ease with which the child and family make transitions may affect normal development and/or the bonding between the child and family members or caregivers. For this reason, the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) sought to identify **effective transition services defined as those offering stability to children and families while developing connections among service settings when change is necessary.** Continuity versus discontinuity horizontally, as children move among settings at a given time, and vertically, as they move between care/education settings over time, is the goal of effective transition services and activities (Kagan, 1992). The challenge confronting the study group was to locate West Virginia programs that assisted children and families in horizontal transitions (among current settings) and vertical transitions (across the years as they moved to new care providers or to kindergarten).

WVEA president Kayetta Meadows, a former kindergarten teacher, and AEL's Classroom Instruction program staff proposed a study group of early childhood educators, child care providers, and parents to investigate transition activities in West Virginia early childhood settings. Early childhood spe-

cialists from the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families, the West Virginia Department of Education, WVEA, and AEL assisted with the nomination of study group members.

Study group members, including one director of child care services, one director of early intervention services, one director of a Head Start transition program, one Head Start teacher, two kindergarten teachers, and one parent advocate for special needs children, began their work in December 1993. The group identified the development of a guide to transition activities as their final product and assisted in the development of a Program Identification Form (Appendix A) to begin locating programs with transition activities/services. Dissemination of the Form began with a statewide Transition Stakeholder Meeting convened by the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs and Assurances. Members then followed up with two mailings of the Program Description Form they developed (Appendix B) to the more than 90 West Virginia transition stakeholders identified by Office staff. Study group members with transition activities in their programs also completed the Program Description Form. A total of 23 completed Program Description Forms were returned. Responses from these Forms are the basis of the Methology and Findings and the Service Provider Directory sections.

Study group members (1) reviewed data from the Program Description Forms, (2) completed item analysis across program responses for specific questions, (3) compiled the Service Provider Directory , (4) completed a review of legal requirements for transition, and (5) reviewed and edited drafts of this document. During the course of the group's work, meetings were held at members' facilities to observe early childhood programs and discuss transition with educators associated with the programs. Additional advisors to the group included Bertha Campbell, consultant in professional development to the national Head Start Transition Demonstration Project, and Sandra Barkey, Director of the Office for Exceptional Children, Kanawha County (WV) Schools. Study group members completed a Recommendations and Reflections Form (Appendix C) to provide suggestions to those interested in beginning transition activities and to evaluate the study group process. Data from these responses and from Program Description Form responses comprise the Recommendations sub-section.

AEL staff developed the Introduction and Rationale sections and the Bibliography, and edited all sections to form the final draft. This draft was critiqued by three external content experts; Carol Mitchell, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), Washington, DC; Carol Williams, Preschool Coordinator, Office of Special Education Programs and Assurances, West Virginia Department of Education; study group members; the WVEA president; and the WVEA executive director. Final changes were incorporated, the document was typeset, and camera-ready masters were produced by AEL staff. Both AEL's Distribution Center and WVEA print and disseminate *Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change* upon request.

Purpose

WVEA, AEL, and study group members expect *Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change* to serve as a guide for early childhood educators in preschool or K-12 settings who seek to establish smooth transitions for children and families. By offering a description of transition activities and observations on obstacles as well as accomplishments, the guide should assist readers in learning about common transition activities and in avoiding problems experienced by others. Study group members have summarized information reported by early childhood program contacts. No endorsement or verification of activities reported is stated or implied. Readers are encouraged to write or phone program directors for further information.

RATIONALE

What is "transition"?

> We have focused on school outcomes, forgetting that if children do not have a good beginning—if they are not well nurtured and well loved during the first years of life—it will be difficult, if not impossible, to compensate fully for such failings later on. (Boyer, 1991, p. 4)

In *Ready to Learn, A Mandate for the Nation,* Boyer recommends a seven-step approach to helping families prepare children for school. While these goals are laudable, today transitions are often haphazard between the home, child care, Head Start programs, age 0-3 early intervention programs, other preschool settings and kindergarten.

Change between settings during the child's day or week as well as change between settings across the years are referred to as "transitions" by many and as "continuity" by others (Kagan, 1992, Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaboration Network, 1993). Love, Logue, Trudeau, and Thayer (1992), in their national study of transitions to kindergarten, define transition as "those activities initiated by schools or preschools to bridge the gap between the preschool and kindergarten experiences" (p. 6). Kagan's emphasis discriminates between vertical continuity—transitions that bridge the gaps between major time periods of a child's life, e.g., home to preschool and preschool to school—and horizontal continuity—transitions that bridge gaps within the same time frame, e.g., between health, social service, or education/child care providers during the same day, week, or month.

As early childhood researchers have focused more intently on transitions between and among settings for children and their families, a clear cry for a continuum of services throughout the birth to age eight (or beyond) period has been advanced and exemplary practices introduced (see essential elements identified by the Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaboration Network in Appendix D). Seamless delivery of services is now the stated objective of many programs, yet identifying effective transition activities currently in operation is difficult. Also, offering transition services does not guarantee that the services will be effective for children and families most in need.

Why are transition services needed?

There is no inherent value in continuity for its own sake. Some discontinuity of experience is a normal part of maturation. Children learn from new experiences, and over time learn that expectations vary in different settings. The concern here is that transitions for young children may be overly abrupt and that children may go from a situation that is appropriate for their age and developmental levels to one that is not. (Love et al. p. 6)

Love et al. state that only 21 percent of districts reported a "wide range" of transition activities and few schools within districts could identify a variety of such services. In a national survey completed in 1993 by the National Center for Education Statistics, only 27 percent of public school kindergarten teachers assumed that by the end of the kindergarten year all children would be ready for first grade. Additionally, while 85 percent of kindergarten teachers indicated that they regularly practice one of the most common transition activities—communicating with first grade teachers about the child's progress to date—communication between preschool and

kindergarten teachers is much more infrequent. Even proximity of the preschool and kindergarten programs in the same school does not ensure communication among teachers. Love et al. reported that systematic communication between kindergarten teachers and all previous caregivers or teachers about the entering children was described by only 10 percent of respondents to his national survey of school districts.

Kagan described several challenges faced by children as they move from home and preschool to the elementary grades including:

- spending more time away from home;
- adjusting to an elementary school environment that is likely to place more emphasis on formal educational experiences, including acquiring reading and mathematics skills and being tested, than in their prior experiences;
- sharing the attention of the teacher with more children than before;
- in some cases, not having the child's prior accomplishments and strengths in preschool recognized and built upon; and
- possibly as a result of such lack of recognition, being unnecessarily misplaced or even retained in one or another elementary school level or program. (p. 1)

Similarly, Copple, Deich, Brush, and Hofferth (1993) discuss the obstacles to learning readiness that exist within and without the child care/education realm of services for young children and families. For example, while only a healthy child can be ready to learn, low birth weight, prenatal alcohol syndrome and drug addiction, inadequate prenatal nutrition, exposure prenatally and in infancy to smoking, lack of proper immunizations and pediatric care, lead poisoning, poor health practices, and lack of access to health care all jeopardize a child's ability to learn. Although a stable and caring environment supports learning, elements such as divorce, single-parent families, teenage parents, poverty, abuse and neglect, homelessness, unsafe homes and neighborhoods, inadequate parenting skills, and stress associated with all these factors can contribute to learning difficulties. Finally, while a child can learn to his/her full potential in an engaging, responsive school environment, inappropriate teaching practices, crowded classrooms, unsafe schools, lack of bilingual instruction, lack of parental involvement, and little coordination between school and social service agencies all create roadblocks to learning (pp. 5-9).

Although many of these obstacles may not be viewed as under the control of schools, without the deliberate attention of early childhood educators to overcome these challenges, children, especially those from low-income families, will continue to flounder upon reaching new settings. Research into the learning of young children indicates that development is best facilitated when basic needs are met and when children are firmly grounded in their present stage of development or context, and appropriately challenged to move to the next stage or setting (Regional Educational Laboratories, p. 5). Sharing information about children and programs between preschool and kindergarten teachers, care providers, and social service agencies can reinforce the continuum of integrated services and smooth transitions. But communication is only one of a wide array of transition activities or strategies.

What are effective transition services?

Transition is establishing an effective working relationship between the sending and the receiving agencies. Therefore, successful transition necessitates effective interagency coordination. The keys to interagency collaboration are perceptions, interpersonal dynamics, participation, and communication (Byrd, Rous, Stephens, Dyk, and Perry, p. 13).

Transition services should occur not only in schools and preschool programs and between schools and families, but services are also needed among educators, care providers, and social service agencies. In their description of essential elements of continuity, researchers from the Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaboration Network include eight critical elements and de-

scribe indicators characteristic of practice for each element. The elements are listed below. Indicators of exemplary practice for each are provided in Appendix C.

1. Family, school, and community partners sharing leadership and responsibility for decision making.
2. A continuum of family-focused, comprehensive, integrated services.
3. Policies, programs, and practices that demonstrate the education, involvement, and empowerment of families.
4. Policies, programs, and practices that demonstrate a sensitivity to the culture and language of children and their families.
5. Communication among all adults who are responsible for the children's care and education.
6. A coordinated approach to staff development across agencies to enhance implementation of home, school, and community linkages.
7. Developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
8. Documentation and reporting of outcomes which are used to refine and / or expand linkages (p. 6).

In their review of the literature describing processes especially suited to preschool-kindergarten-grade one transitions, Love and associates identified three critical elements: (1) preschool programs that have the potential for producing benefits that are worth retaining, (2) an effective elementary school program, and (3) a transfer process with effective activities and events designed to overcome discontinuities. In their analysis of survey and site visit data, Love et al. reported the following attributes of effective transition:

- coordination (including curriculum continuity and orientation visits for teachers, parents, and students) and communication between the kindergarten and any prekindergarten programs the children come from;
- parent involvement in transition; and
- formal written policies relating to transition and continuity (p. 59-60).

Kagan reported the following effective transition elements gleaned from a study of 15 sites of the Head Start Transition Project:

- written transition agreements between Head Start programs and the schools;
- consistent and devoted attention to children's needs at the time of transition, including the orderly passing on of written records and home visits;
- transition efforts that function throughout the year;
- training for parents in dealing with the public education system; and
- visits by kindergarten teachers and children to Head Start programs, and vice versa (p. 7).

Specific models of effective early childhood transition programs are available for study. Love, in his discussion of structural arrangements, transition activities, and approaches to continuity, describes findings from the study's eight site visits. Structural arrangements that appear to support continuity include the locating of developmental preschools within the school and designating regional early childhood education centers that serve all children in preschool through grade two or higher. Both of these approaches provide opportunities for teacher involvement in effective strategies such as: (1) implementation of developmentally appropriate curriculum from preschool through elementary school; (2) frequent visitations and communications between preschool and elementary teachers; (3) sharing of records on students; (4) common professional development experiences for teachers of all levels; (5) student visitations across programs and multiage grouping; and (6) continuity in communications with families.

Sugarman (1991) described the advantages of an early childh ood system, a "set of arrangements under which individuals, programs, and activities work with one another" (p. 37). Suggestions appropriate

to the continuity of service to children include:

- Arranging complementary services (e.g., for a child attending a part-day Head Start program in the morning and a family child care program in the afternoon).
- Making it possible for a child to remain in the same program even though the source of funding changes.
- Arranging program services that a single service provider cannot efficiently provide (e.g., family information, advanced training, child assessments).
- Arranging linkages that are too complex for service programs to make on their own (e.g., use of Medicaid funds and a community health and mental health services).
- Establishing training and staff development programs that serve many providers and create career opportunities. (p. 37).

Sugarman proposes the creation of a "state coordinator" position in each state to (1) serve as advocate for young children; (2) oversee development of the early childhood elements of each of the federally required state plans; (3) negotiate working agreements with Head Start grantees; (4) negotiate working agreements on program responsibilities among providers; and (5) negotiate working agreements for collaborations with state, local, and private agencies that provide specialized services for children and families. Another essential aspect of the systems approach to collaboration for early childhood transitions is the opportunity for program improvements through the cooperation of agency representatives in joint subsystems on planning, family information, child assessment, nutrition and nutrition education, eligibility requirements, and other areas (pp. 37-45).

Copple et al. described five characteristics common to the 24 "promising comprehensive state and local strategies" they identified that address national education goal #1:

- Comprehensiveness, flexibility, and integration of services for children and families;
- A focus on the whole family and the child as family member;
- Accessible, client-centered services;
- Environment and strategies conducive to building relationships of trust and respect with children and families; and
- Emphasis on prevention rather than remediation.

Collaboration is key to ensuring continuity in service to children and families across the years. Recognizing the importance of interagency relationships in *Readiness for School, The Early Childhood Challenge*, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) described programs that incorporate this. These include (1) the "LINK" project in Tulsa, Oklahoma that has nurse practitioners visit child care centers and screen children up to age six for physical and developmental problems and link children to appropriate agencies for assistance; (2) West Virginia's Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families which organizes and facilitates planning and funding for comprehensive programs of social services in rural communities; and (3) Kentucky's Family Resource Centers, which provide social and health services appropriate to community needs within the school system's elementary schools (SREB, 1992).

Collaboration for education is central to the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) in Arkansas and other states in which parents attend support groups and training sessions on a weekly basis to ease the transitions between preschool and kindergarten for children and families (SREB, 1992). Community collaboration is also the focus of Project STEPS (Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools) that established a service delivery model and parent training for insuring successful transition of special needs children from preschool to school settings and, with federal assistance, expanded to a system for model demonstration and dissemination (Byrd et al.).

Finally, uniting the partners (families, child care providers and educators, and health/social service agencies) can work successfully at different levels. Once they have identified their own needs and begun to explore solutions that require the assistance of others, agencies can decide to cooperate, coordinate, or collaborate to achieve the level of interdependence they want to or can achieve. Relationships

among agencies that begin with cooperation can move as trust is developed over time to greater interdependence in functions characteristic of collaboration.

What are the effects of transition services?

Transition across settings has been more carefully addressed during the expansion of services to young children, especially those with developmental delays. This has occurred during the past thirty years with the passage of federal legislation regarding individuals with disabilities and the creation of the Head Start program for children who are disadvantaged. Yet careful documentation and evaluation of the effectiveness of transition programs has just begun.

The 1992 comprehensive study by Love and associates looked at the transition requirements of the Head Start program and the demonstration programs begun by Head Start to extend support for child development into the primary grades. In their discussion of Follow Through, Project Developmental Continuity, and the Administration for Children, Youth, and Family (ACYF) "National Initiative on Transition from Preschool to Elementary School," the authors described findings from evaluation studies of transition projects. For example, the ACYF reported that as teachers increased their participation in transition activities, they rated higher the preparedness of Head Start children and rated lower the initial stress of children entering school. Principals and teachers who participated more in transition activities reported greater involvement with parents.

Additional findings from the Love et al. examination of evaluation studies related to transition projects include the Abecedarian Project, a "carefully controlled early intervention program in North Carolina." Children from six weeks to kindergarten age were served in a program with primary emphasis on parent involvement, child health, and cognitive and social stimulation. "Preliminary studies of program effectiveness showed trends similar to those of other early intervention projects: benefits for participating children plateaued in early elementary school. When participants entered first grade, half were randomly assigned to a home/school resource teacher who provided liaison services to families and teachers. Third grade test results found that in terms of both IQ scores and achievement data, the most successful children were those who participated in both the early intervention and elementary support and the children with the poorest outcomes were those without benefit of either service" (p. A-7).

Other effects of transition programs were noted in the Love et al. analysis. The Brookline Early Education Project was a school-based program designed to prevent school-related difficulties with services for parents and to offer programs for children from infancy to age five. While a range of socioeconomic levels was represented, most participating families were middle class. Love reported: "Participating children, upon reaching second grade, were found to have significantly fewer classroom behavior problems and less difficulty in reading." However, increased staff outreach was necessary to produce these effects for children whose parents had less formal education (p. A-8).

Retention in grade and extra-year programs are two approaches to transition that are commonly used in schools but rarely have been supported by research findings. Holmes's (1989) meta-analysis of 64 studies on retention showed only nine with positive effects of these common practices. While those retained showed an immediate advantage after retention, this declined until after three years no difference existed between those who were and those who were not retained.

While more than 40 states report readiness or transition classes, research has not proven the utility of this means of transition. Smith and Shepard (1989) reported that "two years in kindergarten, even when one year is labeled 'transition program,' fail to enhance achievement or solve the problem of inadequate school readiness" (p. A-10).

Transition is specifically addressed in federal requirements related to young children with disabilities. Early Intervention programs, mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and federally funded to assure assistance to all children age 0-3 with developmental impair-

ments, are required to include policies and procedures to "ensure smooth transition" between settings. Such policies and procedures must include descriptions of how families will be involved; notification to the receiving setting; and convening (with parental consent) of a conference of all parties to review the child's program options and to establish a transition plan. Head Start program educators are also required to prepare plans that address transition of children from early intervention programs into Head Start and from Head Start into next placements. These include individual child transition plans and individual family support plans. Preparation of staff to work with children with all types of disabilities (including severe) for these transitions is also stipulated. Interagency agreements that detail the roles and responsibilities each agency fills in providing or paying for services are also required of Early Intervention programs and all programs for children with disabilities aged 0-21 (including Head Start programs).

Summaries of evaluation findings have been released on the Head Start demonstration projects that focus on "a unified and continuous program of comprehensive services beginning in Head Start and continuing through at least third grade." Selected recommendations from early analysis of these data in "The Head Start-Public School Transition Demonstration, What Are We Learning?" (Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, 1993) include:

- Although transition may be seen as everyone's responsibility, in order for the process to keep moving it must be someone's full time job, not just an item in multiple job descriptions.
- Since nondegreed staff are trained in child development and kindergarten and primary teachers are trained in early childhood education, issues resulting from differences in "how children learn" and "how to teach young children" have to be addressed in a variety of ways to ensure continuity of curriculum and classroom practice, and for the overall transition experience for children to be successful.
- Attrition rates of between 12 and 53 percent must be reduced to establish continuity of services for children and families.
- Few intact Head Start classes move together to become members of the same kindergarten classes. Ways to increase this practice and/or to reduce the complexity of transition activities across multiple receiving and sending agencies need to be identified.
- "Turf" issues and battles are real and must be dealt with before progress can be made. Even perceived rather than real "turf" issues negatively affect the behavior of the individuals who hold them.
- Families care about their children. They will become as involved as the programs/schools will let them. Schools are opening earlier and staying open later. Stereotypes of "poor" or disadvantaged families are being destroyed through active family participation.
- Everyone affected or likely to be affected must be involved before the important decisions are made and before the final designsand processes are in place.

This section of *Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change* has defined early childhood transitions and responded to the "what, why, and how" questions based on recent literature. The remaining sections examine the "what" and "where" of early childhood transition programs and activities in West Virginia through a summary of responses to the Program Description Form (Appendix B). Demographics; activities, services, and practices; communication; professional development; resources; accomplishments and obstacles; evaluation methods; legal requirements; program descriptions; and recommendations to implementors from both Description Form respondents and study group members are included, along with a bibliography.

The "who" question can best be answered by you, the reader. Successful transitions for young children and their families will require efforts that may fall beyond the scope of current job descriptions. As an educator, child care provider, social worker, health care professional, parent, or guardian, you may need to initiate change on behalf of children if the benefits of continuity are to be realized. Your assistance may be in the form of interven-

tions for one child and family or in the creation of coordinated practices and policies that benefit many children and families this year and in years to come. The full merit of your ideas and actions may or may not be recognized. Perhaps a test of significance to apply would be to ask what would become of the children if your new initiative for smooth early childhood transitions never occurred. Study group members and cosponsors of this publication, WVEA and AEL, wish you much success.

Legal Requirements for Early Childhood Transitions

In the world of early childhood education and child care services, many providers are taking actions to offer assistance to children and families, especially for special needs students, as they transition between home, early intervention, preschool, and kindergarten settings. The focus to date has been on establishing transition services for those most in need or most likely to encounter difficulty in regular settings—special needs children and those from disadvantaged families. These actions, in most cases, are in response to more than 27 federal laws with sections relating to young children and numerous laws, policies, and regulations established at the state level in response to federal legislation and funding priorities (Sugarman, p. 22).

Of the laws, three sections of federal legislation most directly require states to establish specific practices and requirements regarding transitions in conjunction with early intervention for special needs children or Head Start programs. Two of these sections are Parts H and B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was originally passed in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), which was modified and superseded in 1990 by IDEA. Part H (section 303.148) of IDEA relates to transitions for children from early intervention (services for children from 0-3 years) to preschool programs. Part B (section 300.54) also refers to transition of individuals from Part H to Part B or from preschool to school or to other programs for children aged 3-21. The third section that requires action on transitions by states and local education agencies is Head Start legislation (reauthorized as part of the Human Services Reauthorization [Augustus Hawkins] Act, enacted in 1990 with later amendments). IDEA is administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education, except for Part H, which is administered in West Virginia by the Department of Health and Human Resources. The Head Start Program is regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Summary of Provisions Relevant to Early Childhood Transitions

IDEA, Part H

To qualify for federal Part H funds, IDEA requires that each state's Part H application "ensure a smooth transition for individuals participating in the early intervention program under this part who are eligible for participation in preschool programs (Part B of Act)." This application must include (1) a description of how families will be included in the transitional plan and (2) a description of how the Part H agency will (a) notify the appropriate local educational agency or intermediate educational unit in which the child resides, (b) convene, with the approval of the family, and the local educational agency or unit, at least 90 days before the child's third birthday, or if earlier, the date on which the child is eligible for the preschool program in order to review the child's program options for the period

from the child's third birthday to the school year's end and establish a transition plan; and (c) establish an interagency agreement to ensure coordination on transition matters if the state education agency is not the lead agency.

Part H regulations require that state guidelines to ensure smooth transitions for children consider:

- financial responsibilities of all appropriate agencies;
- responsibilities for performing evaluations of children;
- development and implementation of an individualized education program (IEP) or an individualized family service plan (IFSP) for each child consistent with the law;
- coordination of communication between agencies and the child's family; and
- mechanisms to ensure the uninterrupted provision of appropriate services to the child.

Part H requires an IFSP for all children and families receiving early intervention services. Any IFSP must include steps that will be taken to support the transition of the child to preschool services, if appropriate, or other services. These steps must include:

- discussions with, and training of, parents regarding future placements and other matters related to the child's transition;
- procedures to prepare the child for changes in service delivery, including steps to help the child adjust to and function in a new setting; and,
- with parental consent, the transmission of information about the child to the local education agency, to ensure continuity of services, including specified evaluation and assessment information.

Part H further specifies that states can choose to use Part H funds to provide a free appropriate public education, in accordance with Part B of the Act, for children with disabilities from their third birthday to the beginning of the following school year.

IDEA, Part B

States must develop policies and procedures to ensure smooth transition for children currently in early intervention programs under IDEA, Part H who will enroll in preschool programs under IDEA, Part B. These must include methods of administration such that when a child turns age three an IEP, or an IFSP, has been developed and implemented.

Part 301 of IDEA, Part B, establishes the Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities program that provides funding for special education and related services to children aged 3-5 with disabilities. At the state's discretion, these preschool funds may be used to provide a free appropriate public education to two-year-old children with disabilities who will reach age three during the school year. The section describes parameters for services, funding requirements for states to obtain federal funds, and distribution requirements for dispersal of grant money by states. While the program benefits transition between current services for children with special needs aged 0-3 years and those in services for age 3-21, these regulations do not outline what form appropriate transition services for children should take. Section 300.152 of Part B explains federal requirements for interagency agreements that must be addressed in each state's plan under IDEA, Part B. These agreements must specify financial responsibilities and procedures for resolving interagency disputes in addition to describing agency responsibilities for services.

Head Start

The Head Start Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) governs both Head Start and the Head Start Transition Demonstration projects. While funding levels have not permitted Head Start programs to serve the many additional children who qualify to enroll, reauthorization in 1990 provided funds for program expansion and an additional $5,048,000 was made available in late 1994 to those who qualify to open new programs or to expand existing ones. These funds should expand and enhance the Head Start mission: to provide comprehensive development services (health, nutritional, education, social, and other ser-

vices) primarily to low-income preschool children and their families to help children achieve their full potential.

The Head Start performance standards for children with disabilities require state attention to transition aspects including:

- Development of a disabilities service plan which addresses, among other things, strategies for the transition ofchildren into Head Start from early intervention services and transition of children from Head Start into next placements. Preparation of staff and parents for the entry of children with disabilities (with particular emphasis on children with severe disabilities) into Head Start is required.
- The disabilities service plan must include commitment to interagency agreement with the schools and other agencies in the service area.

  Such agreements must include participation in Child Find (identification in the community of children eligible for services); joint training of parents and staff; procedures for referral, IEP meetings, and placement decisions; transition; resource sharing; information sharing; and other items agreed upon by both parties.
- Informing parents of children with disabilities of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; offering support to parents of children with disabilities as they enter from infant/toddler programs.
- Notifying the school by Head Start staff in cooperation with parents of the planned enrollment of children with disabilities.

Head Start Transition Demonstration Project

Through this initiative, funded in 1991 by House Resolution 4151-17, federal funds are available to Head Start agencies and school districts to extend Head Start services to low-income children and families from kindergarten through third grade. Supportive services, including health, immunization, mental health, nutrition, parenting education, literacy, and social services are provided along with activities to include the active involvement of parents in the education of their children (Sugarman, p. 71). The project is designed as a three-year evaluation with comparable demonstration and control groups of Head Start and regular education students studied at the 32 sites currently in operation. No more than one site per state may be funded. (See the Service Provider Directory for the West Virginia project.)

Transition to Success Act of 1994

At press time for this document, legislation entitled the "Improving America's Schools Act of 1993" had been proposed in the U.S. Senate that would establish, if enacted, Transition to Success Challenge Grants. The Department of Health and Human Services would make available grants to school districts that have formed consortia with early childhood development programs (including Head Start) to develop and operate programs that assist low-income elementary school students in kindergarten through third grade and their families. Services that should be included in proposals are:

- a supportive services team of family service coordinators to assist families, administrators, and teachers to respond to health, immunization, mental health, nutrition, social service, and educational needs of students;
- home visits and assistance to families;
- a family outreach and support program including a plan for involving parents in the management of the program;
- assistance to families, administrators, and teachers in enhancingdevelopmental continuity between the programs assisted under the Head Start Act, other early childhood programs, and elementary school classes; and
- preparation of a plan for the transition of each child from Head Start, or other early childhood development program, to kindergarten.

Coordination between existing service programs and education and social service agencies would be required with passage of this legislation. Specific

examples include development and implementation of systematic procedure for receiving records on children who enter school from Head Start or other early childhood development programs; establishing channels of communication between school staff and agency counterparts; conducting meetings involving staff of sending and receiving agencies or programs; and organizing and participating in joint transition-related training of staff of all programs concerned.

Summary

Additional legislation, other than the major requirements discussed above, contains references to early childhood transitions (e.g., Even Start). The reader should note the common elements called for in the above laws or regulations. These are focused on:

- serving underserved children or those with special needs and their families;
- establishing communication and collaboration across service providers and between agencies and schools;
- involving participants including families and service provider staff in meaningful decision-making and management of programs; and
- reaching children and families where they are in homes and through rural and urban centers.

The role of the parent as the first teacher of the child is acknowledged as is the importance of maintaining continuity of service to ensure smooth transitions. Current and future legislation that continues these emphases on communication and collaboration with all parties should greatly aid the progress of the nation toward the achievement of national goal 1: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

Methodology and Findings

Methodology

The first task of the study was to identify West Virginia child care providers, schools, and other early childhood settings that regularly use activities to ease the transitions between settings during a given year and/or as the child progresses from one care provider to the next or to kindergarten. The AEL staff facilitator met with West Virginia Department of Education staff involved with transitions—the Early Childhood Specialist and the Statewide Preschool Coordinator of the Office of Special Education Programs and Assurances—and with the Early Childhood Specialist of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families for assistance in locating programs. The Office of Special Education was simultaneously coordinating a Transitions Task Force to identify concerns and develop recommendations for state policies and procedures to be implemented at the local level for early childhood transitions. To coordinate the work of the study group with the Task Force and to contact those individuals most likely to be involved with transition activities, persons throughout the state who were identified by the Department of Education as "transition stakeholders" were selected as the target group.

The Program Identification Form (Appendix A) developed by study group members was distributed at a Transition Stakeholders Meeting held by the Office of Special Education and mailed to all who registered for the event. The Identification Form explained the study group's focus and asked respondents to recommend programs that address transitions between preschool and school by "offering stability to children and families while developing connections among service settings when change is necessary." Study group members also completed forms and recommended individuals who should receive a copy of the Identification Form. The group-developed Program Description Form (Appendix B) was mailed to program contact persons named on the returned Identification Forms. A followup mailing to all Identification Form recipients included a second copy of the Identification Form and the Program Description Form, should they choose to recommend their own programs or share it with others. A total of 105 transition stakeholders identified by the Department of Education and study group members received the Program Description Form, the Identification Form, and a cover letter explaining the study and requesting their participation. These stakeholders included directors of private preschools, Early Intervention (0-3 special needs child identification and assistance) services, Head Start programs, the Head Start Transition Demonstration Program in the state, and the state director of child care.

Twenty-four completed Program Description Forms were returned to AEL following the initial and followup mailings. This was a 25 percent response rate. Study group members determined that, based on transition service descriptions, twenty-three of the programs could be included for further analysis. However, inclusion in this document does not imply an endorsement of the transition or other services of any provider by AEL, WVEA, or the West Virginia Department of Education. Selected respondents were contacted by phone to provide missing

information or further program details where necessary.

Study group members used frequencies and emergent category analysis to identify commonalities in responses as they individually summarized the data across all programs in developing the Findings section of the document. Due to the low response rate, the reporting of frequencies was used along with conclusions drawn from the data and example statements typical of the most frequent responses. The study intended to identify transition programs and activities where they existed. Conclusions about all West Virginia child care providers, kindergarten classes, Early Intervention, or Head Start programs should not be drawn. However, both the low number of Forms returned as well as the paucity of transition activities described by these recommended transition stakeholders may indicate that few early childhood care providers and the receiving schools' kindergarten programs have institutionalized transition services. The following sections report the findings.

Demographic Data

All 23 respondents completed Section I of the Program Description Form (see Appendix B), which inquired about program type; enrollment; years of operation; ages of children served; affiliation of program (fiscal agent); community type served; and staff number, type, and ratio of staff to students. Contact information is included in the Service Provider Directory section of this document. The types and frequencies of programs are shown in Figure 1.

The program respondent was most often the director or a professional staff person. The respondents reported service to a broad spectrum of ages of children, ranging from birth to teenage. The programs were based in a variety of settings, including public schools (6), social service agencies (6), private (6), and one church-based. While services for children may have occurred in a school, center, or home setting, the "base" indicated the fiscal agent or sponsoring agency for the program.

Thirteen of the programs served primarily rural populations with a sizable number serving suburban and urban populations as well. Only two programs did not serve a rural population. More than half of the programs described services to special needs children. A few programs did not report services to this population.

The programs also represented a variety of sizes, both in terms of total enrollment and total staff. Program enrollments ranged in size from 27 to 712 children, with an average of 170. Total staff varied greatly based upon the type of program (i.e., home-based versus center-based), and also upon respondents' views of staff as full-time, part-time, contract, and/or volunteers. The range was from 4 to 120 staff members with the majority of programs reporting 25 or fewer. Staff to child ratios appeared correlated to the age of the children served, with the lower ratios found with younger populations. West Virginia law for child care programs requires staff to child ratios of 1:4 for infants and toddlers up to age two, 1:8 for two-year-olds, 1:10 for three-year-olds, 1:12 for four-year-olds, and 1:15 for five to six-year-olds. The highest ratio reported was 1:16, the state limit for child care of school age children.

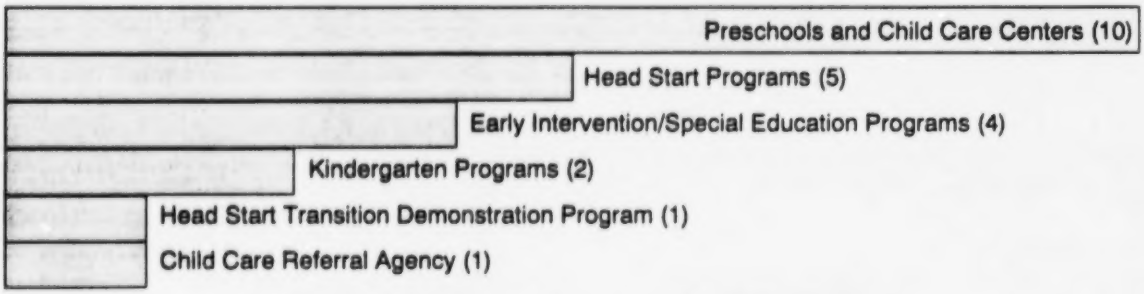

Preschools and Child Care Centers (10)
Head Start Programs (5)
Early Intervention/Special Education Programs (4)
Kindergarten Programs (2)
Head Start Transition Demonstration Program (1)
Child Care Referral Agency (1)

Figure 1. Types and Frequencies of Programs

The predominant staff types in center-based programs were teachers and aides, while home-based programs consisted largely of special educators and social service coordinators. Contract staff were primarily therapists (physical, occupational, and speech), psychologists, and nurses, although many programs employed therapists in full or part-time positions. Several of the programs indicated having parents as volunteers or on staff at least part-time.

The programs reported are representative of a transition stakeholder group and, while diverse, they may not fully capture the types of transition services available to West Virginia children and families. However, similar transition issues, such as the difficulties of communications between service providers, appeared in response to many items. These findings are reported in the following sections.

Transition Activities, Services, or Practices

Section III, item #1 of the Program Description Form asked respondents to check any from among 14 transition activities, generated by study group members, that were used by their program and to describe others not listed. Of the 24 completed Forms received, three did not include responses to this item. Figure 2 records total frequencies of activities, services, or practices.

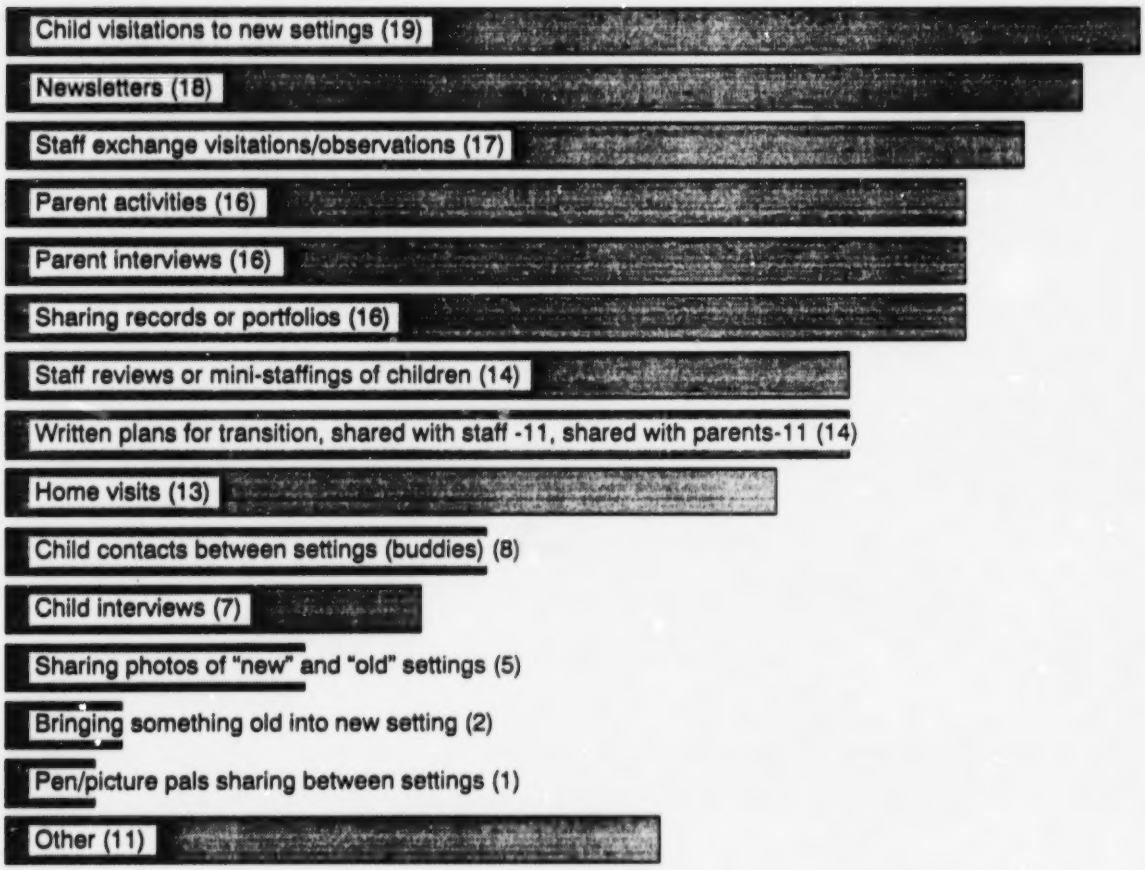

Child visitations to new settings (19)
Newsletters (18)
Staff exchange visitations/observations (17)
Parent activities (16)
Parent interviews (16)
Sharing records or portfolios (16)
Staff reviews or mini-staffings of children (14)
Written plans for transition, shared with staff -11, shared with parents-11 (14)
Home visits (13)
Child contacts between settings (buddies) (8)
Child interviews (7)
Sharing photos of "new" and "old" settings (5)
Bringing something old into new setting (2)
Pen/picture pals sharing between settings (1)
Other (11)

Figure 2. Frequency of Transition Activities Used by Programs

Eleven respondents suggested additional activities, services, or practices, including a "Move Up Day;" a Kindergarten Book completed by children to share with the new setting's teacher; workshops for teachers and parents as orientation; an introduction to cafeteria meals and procedures; a picnic at the receiving site; a parent meeting regarding transportation and assistance with local board of education member; a visit to or from school buses; a circle discussion with children about moving to a new setting; monthly parent committee meetings; total inclusion of all preschool-attending five-year-olds into the kindergarten class every Friday; and Transition Substitutes—aides who assist special needs children in kindergarten classes during the first 90 days of the year. Written plans were less frequently indicated by preschool program respondents.

While this item provided data on one of the most critical elements of the study—assistance currently practiced to ease children and families through transitions—the extent and diversity of activities reported varied with the type of program. For example, written plans for transition are required of all Head Start, Head Start Transition Demonstration, and Early Intervention programs. All respondents of these programs indicated they had such plans and shared them with parents and staff.

Professional Development on Transition Issues

Twenty-two program contact persons responded to Section III, item #2, which requested a description of professional development sessions about transitions that were provided for staff. Of these, several respondents discussed professional development conducted by program directors for staff, parents, and volunteers. Others described workshops or series of sessions presented for teachers receiving children from their programs, e.g., Head Start or kindergarten teachers. All of these responses are grouped as program-provided staff development in Figure 3. All Early Intervention and Head Start program respondents reported participating in local, regional, state, and/or national workshops or conferences on transitions as part of mandated training. Two respondents mentioned their work with the statewide Early Childhood Transition Initiative. The staff and director of one program described participation in the multi-year Department of Labor training leading to Early Childhood Apprenticeship certification.

Figure 3 describes the range of responses to this item. Multiple forms of professional development were reported by some respondents, accounting for more than 22 responses.

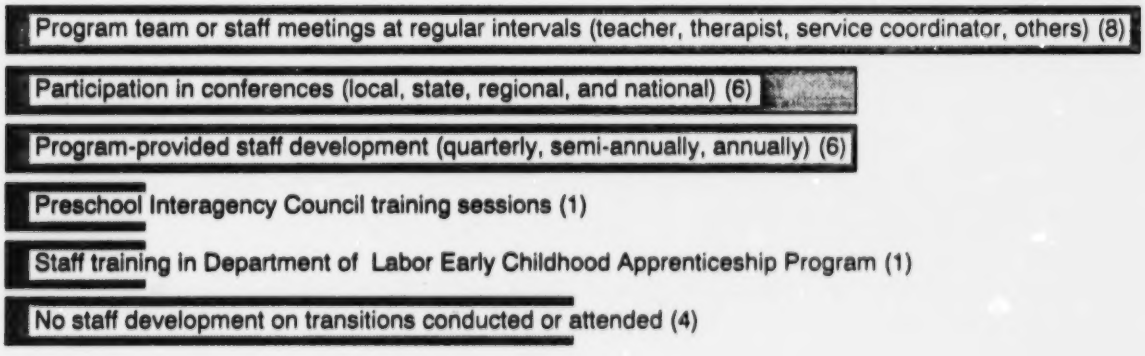

Program team or staff meetings at regular intervals (teacher, therapist, service coordinator, others) (8)
Participation in conferences (local, state, regional, and national) (6)
Program-provided staff development (quarterly, semi-annually, annually) (6)
Preschool Interagency Council training sessions (1)
Staff training in Department of Labor Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program (1)
No staff development on transitions conducted or attended (4)

Figure 3. Frequency and Type of Professional Development Used by Programs

Perhaps not surprisingly, professional development regarding early childhood transitions was most often reported by programs that are required by law to have written policies and established procedures for receiving and sending children to and from other programs—Early Intervention and Head Start programs. The size of the program also appeared correlated to the provision of professional development—larger programs reported more professional development attended by staff and presented by staff for parents or teachers, aides, and social service coordinators receiving their children. Finally, several respondents described staffings or information exchange sessions about specific children as professional development. While these probably benefit sending and receiving programs and parents regarding specific children, they may or may not extend staff learning or experience in approaches to successful transitions.

Communications and Gaining Support

The 16 respondents to Section III, item #3 provided descriptions of methods they use to gain educator and family support for their programs, two important participant groups in the success of transition activities. Interpersonal communication training such as workshops, conferences, inservice sessions, and interviews, they concluded, benefit all involved in the transition process. However, one-to-one communications were mentioned most often. These took forms such as word-of-mouth communication of services for families; one-to-one contacts and visits between preschool, Head Start, or Early Intervention personnel and receiving program teachers; and ongoing communications between service providers and school system directors of special education, principals, or board of education members. Public communication forms were also beneficial to, and required of, some service providers. To assist in identification of special needs children, Early Intervention programs and others utilized letters to all families in the service region, television and radio public service announcements, and newspaper articles. Referral by physicians, schools, and social service agencies linked many providers with children and families in need of assistance.

But, as one Head Start director stated, "It is easier to locate those needing service than it is to serve them. Part of the difficulty lies in convincing the parent that the child needs special attention." Creating an "open house" environment assisted many programs as they encouraged families with newsletters, parent activities, parenting classes, family volunteers on field trips, family advisory groups, and parent or guardian manuals. Finally, part of maintaining support lies in the added assistance some programs reported such as linking families to other social service agencies and providing child care for the children of teachers who would receive the program's children.

Familiarity of families and educators with program services and staff were described as essential to maintaining the programs and increasing the effectiveness of transitions between programs. One kindergarten teacher added, "The transition process is made easier when staff, parents, and children are directly involved. Communication opportunities need to occur throughout the year to ensure continuity in the transition process."

Transition Readiness

Age was the most frequently cited factor in response to Section III, item #4 regarding timing of transitions from one setting to the next with nine programs reporting this factor from the total of 23 responses. Head Start programs transition children to kindergarten in the school year beginning after the child's fifth birthday. Early Intervention program contacts responded that children are evaluated for six months prior to their third birthdays and transition to school or to Head Start programs (or other services) at that age are based upon the recommendations from a multidisciplinary team meeting.

Head Start guidelines for determining readiness for transition are described in the Creative Curriculum guide used by at least one responding program. Observations, evaluations, anecdotal records, kindergarten screenings, and teacher rec-

ommendations are important to decisionmaking regarding transitions between preschools and kindergarten, several respondents added. Those involved in transition decisions include the Head Start and preschool teachers, Early Intervention specialists, program directors, case managers, service coordinators, and other specialists familiar with the child. Most often the agency or school initiates the transition process. Four programs mentioned that parents determine when a child is ready for transition with discussion of options by a case manager.

Transfer of Records Upon Transition

Item #5 of Section III asked respondents, "Which records are kept and which are transferred as the child progresses?" Responses varied widely across programs and within the three major types of service provider programs responding—Head Start, Early Intervention, and Preschools. Health records were most frequently kept along with Individual Education Plans for special needs children. Results from developmental tests (Peabody, Child Assessment System, Brigance, LAP, and others not specified), observation and anecdotal records, and Medicaid information were frequently mentioned as part of a child's permanent record.

Four Early Intervention programs transferred a child's records, two with permission of the parents only. Four Head Start programs transferred all records to schools where kindergartens would receive the children, two with permission of parents only. Two Head Start programs transferred no records and the Head Start Transition Demonstration Program did not describe its transfer practice. The one kindergarten respondent and the preschool/kindergarten respondent indicated that the permanent record followed the child through school. Preschools varied the most across responses. Two indicated that no records transfer, two transferred records with parent approval, five reported the transfer of all records, and one did not describe their transfer practice.

Consistency in collection of developmental progress data across programs was not apparent nor was a clear understanding of issues of confidentiality of child records. While respondents within service provider categories most tightly regulated such as Head Start and Early Intervention programs may not have fully reported all records actually kept, some confusion seems to exist regarding the transfer of such data. Further, while clear policies regarding data collection and transfer of data may exist within individual preschool programs and the agencies receiving their children, much variance across preschool programs was evident. The role of parent approval in the release of data was apparent in many responses. Since transfer of data represents an extension of communication strategies used by the programs to benefit the child, many seem to be initiating data transfer.

Program Evaluation

"How do you know your program is effective? Describe any evaluation conducted," asked item #6 of Section III of the Program Description Form. Most of the 19 responses to this item provided little detail on the methods of evaluation used. However, multiple measures were reported by a few of the respondents. Feedback from parents when their children are in the program and following transition of their children to new settings was critical to program evaluation for eleven programs, the most frequently cited formal or informal evaluation method. Six service providers described annual or semiannual evaluations completed by parents and a seventh reported an annual interview with parents, while others described informal methods or did not specify.

Observing and measuring the progress of children was the method next most often reported method (nine programs) for determining program effectiveness. Few program respondents described how this information was collected, but an annual evaluation was named by one program and the fading of the need for Transition Substitutes was mentioned by another. Feedback from the receiving service provider or school following a child's transition was named as an evaluation method by four programs. Five programs also collected annual or more frequent evaluation data as directed by their regulatory agencies (e.g., Head Start fiscal agents). One program surveyed staff annually regarding

program effectiveness.

A review of all forms of program evaluation reported indicates that eight programs use some form of formal, usually written measure while others drew conclusions from student progress data on children in and transitioned from program services and from verbal feedback from parents. One program indicated that their continued funding and receipt of referrals measured their effectiveness. Five programs indicated they were using no formal means of evaluation and did not report informal measures. Further research may be needed to determine the types of information being collected and conclusions that might be drawn across programs about the effectiveness of early childhood services as well as transition activities.

Accomplishments

Twenty-two responses were received to item #7 of Section III regarding the greatest accomplishments of the service provider's transition program or practices. Most frequently cited (seven programs) were activities that involved introducing children to new settings. Activities described included transporting children to schools they would be attending and meeting the teachers and staff. One Head Start program reported positive attitudes toward kindergarten on the part of parents and children as its greatest accomplishment—"Visits to the classroom have lessened any anxiety on the part of parents and children."

Seven responses centered around accomplishments in early intervention programs/practices. These included helping families find needed child care services and helping parents understand the special education process. Education was a critical practice and one from which many Early Intervention programs derive their greatest accomplishments. One E.I. respondent described her program's greatest accomplishment as providing "the family's empowerment to make decisions that are best for them and their child."

One districtwide special education program's use of the Transition Substitute, a substitute teacher trained to assist special needs children in the classroom with the regular teacher during the first three months of transition to kindergarten, led to the respondent's description of the program's greatest accomplishment as the "continuum of services" between Early Intervention and Head Start or kindergarten classes. Transition substitutes assist in methods consistent with a child's Individual Education Program (IEP).

Four responses emphasized successful educational practices. Two preschools focused on developing children's social skills and cited development of a pre-readiness curriculum and early childhood training for staff. One preschool reported work toward greater cooperation in transitions with the school system. One preschool's greatest accomplishment was the successful evaluation of this program. One program recognized accomplishment in the development of cooperative efforts between Early Intervention programs, local special education departments, boards of education, Head Start programs, and kindergartens.

Finally, many respondents take great pride in their work with children. As one preschool director described it, "I feel the greatest accomplishment of my transition program is when my former students make quick adjustments to the regular school system and continue their developmental progress."

Obstacles

When asked to identify their biggest obstacle and any means they used to avoid or to solve it, item #8 of Section III, 22 respondents reported problems associated with three categories: interagency cooperation, families, or time and stress.

"The biggest obstacle was getting the various agencies and programs to see the importance of successful transitions" reported One Head Start program respondent reported. This response typified the seven that noted interagency cooperation as their most difficult obstacle. Cooperation was sometimes lacking in terms of scheduling visits, sharing information/child files, handling funding adjustments, discussing development of individual children, and coordination of procedures for families. The problem of preparing children of any age for the

several kindergarten programs they may enter in the fall is at best difficult when sharing of information, frequent discussions, and visits for staff and families are established. It increases with the infrequent contacts that most programs reported having with receiving agencies. Four of the six Head Start and two of the three Early Intervention programs included in the study cited this lack of interagency cooperation as an obstacle.

The process of working closely with families that provides the rewards of early childhood education was often cited as problematic. Five respondents, preschools, Early Intervention programs, and a child care referral agency, described obstacles associated with families including: failure to attend parent training; parent apathy; ignorance of agency services and policies; and difficulties in matching family needs to provider schedules. To address these obstacles, programs adopted the following practices: providing parenting classes; reviewing policies and instructional materials with parents; helping parents find alternative services, and scheduling parent teacher conferences. For example, when parents fail to attend important meetings, one E.I. service coordinator uses home visits to explain transition services in an "Understanding Special Education" booklet. Parent apathy was a continuing problem reported by a few programs.

Finally, the lack of time was mentioned by several respondents as a problem to the delivery of services. Time to meet in small groups with children, to discuss student progress among teachers in different programs or levels, and to arrange visits by children to new programs was described as obstacles. The five responses in this category were made by preschools, a kindergarten, and the Head Start Transition Demonstration project respondent. Flexibility in scheduling on the part of staff and parents were reported solutions. Individual programs reported problems with transportation, administrative procedures, child placement, and child and staff stress. Field testing of procedures before implementation solved one of these problems for a preschool program. Finally, one of the widest reaching solutions was suggested by a preschool director who suggested, "Make a transition plan and stick to it. We meet monthly to discuss ours."

Resources

Fourteen of the 24 respondents replied when asked, on item #9 of Section III of the Program Description Form, to list any resources they had found helpful in developing transition services. Categories of human and print resources emerged as responses were analyzed. While respondents identified few print resources as especially helpful, they described in greater detail the assistance they received from networking at the local, state, regional, and national levels with staff of sending and receiving programs, their counterparts in similar programs, and transitions trainers or technical assistance providers. The following resources were listed:

Human Resources

- School district special education staff
- Parent Resource Centers
- Community Skill Builders, Inc.
- School committees, various
- West Virginia Advocates
- Networks of school personnel
- MidSouth Regional Resource Center, Human Development Institute, University of Kentucky-Peggy Stephens
- Early intervention program staff
- Head Start staff
- State and local transition training
- Hospital staff
- Head Start Transition Demonstration Project directors
- School psychologists
- Teachers in receiving schools
- Team efforts

Print Resources

- Child and family files
- Project Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools (STEPS) of Kentucky
- National Head Start materials (2)
- AEL's "Preschool to School Linkages Conference" materials (2)

The number of nonrespondents to this item and responses from a few who described unsuccessful searches for resources on early childhood transitions

may indicate that few print resources exist or are widely known.

Recommendations

Response to item #10, Section III, which asked respondents to provide recommendations to others planning an early childhood transitions program, yielded 23 suggestions. One commonality among these was the need for communication during all stages of transition and among all programs and the family. Leading from the need for more communication was that of collaboration among care providers, agencies, schools, and families. The media was also named as important to collaboration in helping the identification process and promoting clarification of program services. Finally, an assumption apparent in many responses was the importance of involving children and families in the transition plan. This practice was viewed as increasing communication and ensuring the appropriateness of transition activities for the individual child.

The advice from many programs was best captured in responses to the request for recommendations for others. Respondents' words speak strongly from their years of experience in service to children and families. Their suggestions, as the reader will note, are not contradictory but complement the development of a comprehensive process to ease transitions for children and families. In their words, program contacts offer these suggestions:

Communications and Collaboration

Communicate early and often with all parties. Identify why transition is helpful to each.

Develop working relationships with staff in receiving programs.

Develop a cooperative interagency team that meets on a regular basis.

Arrange for staff to visit programs with which their program transitions children.

Be available to serve on committees, volunteer to help. Ask to attend training.

Establish staff exchanges between programs to observe practices.

Sell the program to your staff first.

Work with health and social service agencies as well as care providers throughout the community to find the best placement for the child.

Administration

Follow the federal guidelines. They are thorough.

Start with small steps, but always follow up.

Use a global release of information for all agencies involved.

Develop a transition plan and stick to it.

Parents and Families

Hold spring and fall transition meetings or workshops to orient parents.

Continue to provide consistent family support when the child leaves the program.

Help parents to feel confident and provide them information they can share with the child's next teacher.

From the intake day begin informally planning a family transition.

Work with families to empower them to see all options (public or private school, child care, Head Start, etc.) and to make decisions that best fit their needs and the child's.

Children

Provide Transition Substitutes for the first nine weeks that a special-needs child spends in kindergarten.

Visit the setting(s) the children will be entering, tour the school and bus, meet the teachers, perhaps even pair children with kindergartners to interact.

Provide a chance to observe; don't just move in.

Include a trial period in transition plans for individual children.

Listen to the individual child and to the family.

Personal

Keep a positive attitude.

Service Provider Directory

Twenty-three programs provided the following information in response to Section I Demographics and Contact Information and Section II Rationale and Objectives for Transition Program on the Early Childhood Transitions Study Group's Program Description Form. The comprehensiveness of the program and its transition activities was a determining factor regarding inclusion in the above Findings sections and in this Directory. Recipients of the Early Childhood Transitions Program Identification Form and Program Description Form were a targeted group of transition stakeholders identified by West Virginia Department of Education to have interest and some experience in transition activities for young children and families. Study group members did not intend to survey every Head Start program, Early Intervention program, preschool, or kindergarten in the state, but nominations of others by initial recipients of the Program Identification Form were reviewed for inclusion.

Program staff persons completed the Program Description Forms used as the basis of the following descriptions. While selected program contact persons responded to followup telephone interviews to provide clarification to responses, no additional information beyond Form responses generally was sought. Inclusion in this document, therefore, does not verify the accuracy of this information nor indicate an endorsement of the program by WVEA, AEL, the West Virginia Department of Education, or the Office of Educational Research and Information, U.S. Department of Education. For further information, please write or phone the program contact persons listed. Directory information is arranged alphabetically within program types—Early Intervention programs, Head Start programs, Head Start Transition Demonstration project, kindergartens, preschools and child care centers, and child care referral programs.

Early Intervention Programs

Child Development Services—RESA VIII
Regional Education Service Agency VIII
615 W. King St.
Martinsburg, WV 25401
Contact person: JoAnn Richards
Telephone: 304/267-3595

This is an Early Intervention program serving children with developmental delays from birth through three years with developmental delays. The program has offered home-based services to families in eight counties for four years. Transition services for children and families are required of all Early Intervention programs to facilitate a seamless continuum of assistance. RESA VIII Services emphasize cross-agency/school communications.

F.M.R.S. Early Intervention
Fayette, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers Counties
Mental Health, Inc.
101 S. Eisenhower Drive
Beckley, WV 25801
Contact person: Rhea Essa
Telephone: 304/256-7100

Located in a mental health facility, this Early Intervention program serving 120 children with developmental delays from birth through three years has served families for 17 years. The primary focus of the program's transition activities is provision of information to empower families to make appropriate decisions for their children.

Summit Center Early Intervention Program
Summit Center for Human Development
6 Hospital Plaza
Clarksburg, WV 26301
Contact person: Anne Krohe
Telephone: 304/623-5661, ext. 238

In operation for ten years, this Early Intervention program currently serves 200 children with developmental delays from birth through age four. Located in a mental health agency, the program has a five-county catchment area and aims to assist families in their decisions regarding placement of their children.

Head Start Programs

Braxton County Head Start
Braxton County Board of Education
400 4th Street
Sutton, WV 26601
Contact person: Morna Greene
Telephone: 304/765-7101

This program is situated in an elementary school and serves approximately 150 children, ages three and four. It has been in operation for twelve years and provides kindergarten readiness.

Greenbrier Head Start
Greenbrier County Board of Education
202 Chestnut Street
Lewisburg, WV 24901
Contact person: Terri Wontrobski
Telephone: 304/647-6470

Located in a public school, this program serves 122 children, aged three, four, and five. In operation for ten years, the program's transition services focus on guaranteeing a continuum of services to children and parents and on reducing the anxiety level of children and parents transitioning to a new program.

McDowell County Head Start
The Council of the Southern Mountains
P.O. Box 158
Wilcoe, WV 24895
Contact person: Helen K. Carson
Telephone: 304/448-2131

This Head Start program is located in a community action agency and serves 449 children, aged three, four, and five. It has been in operation for 29 years. Major foci of the transition program are to familiarize children and families with school settings, to adjust Head Start curriculum and procedures where necessary, and to eliminate or minimize barriers to the continuance of individual child development plans.

Monongalia Head Start
Monongalia County Board of Education
101 Wilson Avenue
Morgantown, WV 26505
Contact person: Marie Alsop
Telephone: 304/291-9330

This Head Start program serves 133 children, ages three and four, in an elementary school. In operation for 27 years, the program's main goal in the transition process is to increase program awareness by both the Head Start teachers and the kindergarten teachers through staff visitations.

Multi-County Head Start
Multi-County Community Action Against Poverty, Inc.
P.O.Box 3228
Charleston, WV 25332
Contact person: Sue Durbin
Telephone: 304/342-1388

Operated by a community action agency in agency and school settings for 712 children, aged three and four in four counties, this Head Start program has been in existence for 29 years. A major focus of their transition activities is to educate school district personnel about the developmental and educational quality of program services and to increase collaboration.

North Central West Virginia Head Start
North Central West Virginia Community Action Association
Route 1, Box 1028
Kingwood, WV 26537
Contact person: Tammy Bolyard
Telephone: 304/329-2625

A center-based program serving 110 families with children aged three, four, and five, this Head Start program has operated for 25 years. A particular focus is assistance to families in preparing their children for school, including understanding the Individualized Education Plans of special needs children.

Head Start Transition Demonstration Project

Transition Demonstration Project
Southwestern Community Action Council
540 5th Avenue
Huntington, WV 25701
Contact person: B. Lynn Bolen
Telephone: 304/525-5151

Federally funded since fall 1991 as one of 32 Head Start Transition Demonstration Projects in the nation, this project provides services to 619 five- and six-year-olds in two counties. The major purpose of the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision of health and social services and education support services as Head Start children and families transition to kindergarten and first grade.

Kindergartens

(While the study group did not widely survey kindergarten programs, one included in the transition stakeholder group and one study group responded to the Program Description Form. Their transition activities may or may not be representative of all West Virginia kindergarten classes).

Boone County Kindergarten Academy
Boone County Schools
P.O. Box 730
Uneeda, WV 25205
Contact person: Diana Startzel
Telephone: 304/369-0558

A preschool and kindergarten program operated by the school district, the Academy is housed in its own building. It serves 119 children aged four through six (tuition preschool and public kindergarten) and has operated for four years. A major feature of the transition program is staff exchange visitations and observations and joint preschool-kindergarten student activities.

Kingwood Elementary School Kindergarten
Preston County Schools
207 S. Price Street
Kingwood, WV 26537
Contact person: Mildred Lindley
Telephone: 304/329-1034

A public school kindergarten, this program serves 86 children aged five and six. A major feature of the transition program is involvement of kindergarten staff with Head Start staff.

Preschools or Child Care Programs

Children's Place
625 Richmond Street
Huntington, WV 25701
Contact person: Marsha A. Dawson
Telephone: 304/525-8586

Approximately 120 children aged twelve months through five years are served in this child care program in operation for the past 14 years. Program objectives include easing transitions for families as children move from home to center, room to room within the center, and from child care into kindergarten.

Early Learning Child Development Center
River Valley Child Development Services (RVCDS)
1448 Tenth Avenue
Huntington, WV 25701
Contact person: Suzi Brodof
Telephone: 304/523-3917

This program is a private, nonprofit center serving children aged twelve months through six years with child care and after-school programs for elementary school students. The Center has served families in a six-county area for 22 years and enrolls 75 children. RVCDS also operates a child care program in Hamlin, WV.

Friends-R-Fun Child Development Center, Inc.
Highway 41 N., Box 2128
Summersville, WV 26651
Contact person: Judy Olson
Telephone: 304/872-2157

Infants aged six weeks through twelve-year-olds (approximately 99 total) are enrolled in this private child care center in operation for eight years. The program aims to offer safe child care and kindergarten readiness for a rural area underserved by child care facilities.

First Presbyterian Church Preschool
16 Broad Street
Charleston, WV 25301
Contact person: Jackie Taylor
Telephone: 304/343-8961

This church-based program serves 166 children aged one through five and has been in operation for more than forty years. The focus of transition activities is discussion with the children with emphasis on transition as a major part of growing up and learning new skills.

Kanawha County Preschool Special Education Program
Kanawha County Schools
200 Elizabeth Street
Charleston, WV 25311
Contact person: Debbie Brown
Telephone: 304/348-7740

This preschool special education program serves 150 three to five-year-old children with special needs in a variety of settings including private preschools, Head Start programs, homes, and elementary schools. Some of the programs are inclusion in which disabled and nondisabled children are peers in learning experiences. A major transition activity is the provision of a Transition Substitute to assist the special needs child and regular education teacher in the classroom during the first few months of kindergarten.

Marion County Preschool Program
Marion County Schools
200 Gaston Avenue
Fairmont, WV 26554
Contact person: Linda Bond
Telephone: 304/367-2137

This is a preschool special education program in a public school setting that serves 33 three to five-year-old children with developmental delays. The eight-year-old program's objective is to provide smooth transitions for children and families from Early Intervention services into preschool and kindergarten.

The Nicholas Preschool Program
Seneca Mental Health/Mental Retardation Council, Inc.
106 McKees Creek Road
Summersville, WV 26651
Contact person: Sharon Spencer
Telephone: 304/872-2090

Located in a social service agency, this preschool serves 33 two- through five-year-old children with and without developmental delays. The program began in 1993 and is in the process of formulating a transition plan.

Preston Child Development Program
West Virginia Department of Education
HC 82, Box 25
Terra Alta, WV 26764
Contact person: Joyce Kisamore
Telephone: 304/789-2297

This is one of three preschool programs funded directly by the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Education, to serve children aged two through five (primarily with special needs) who reside in very rural areas. This program, in operation for 20 years, serves children in rural sections of Preston County. Two similar programs are the Wheeling Child Development Program (Sandy Smith, 304/242-1628) and the Glenville Child Development Program (Tony Russell, 304/354-6408). The directors have jointly developed a Child Assessment System and all focus on developmentally appropriate assistance and readiness for kindergarten.

West Virginia University Child Development Laboratory
West Virginia University
702 Allen Hall
P.O. Box 6124
Morgantown, WV 26506-6124
Contact person: Dr. Bobbie Gibson Warash
Telephone: 304/293-2110

A preschool laboratory school based in the Division of Family Resources, College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University, this private-pay program serves 43 children aged three through five. For 45 years the Laboratory has provided practicum experience for students of child development. A major feature of the transition service offered is taking children to visit the schools they will be attending.

YWCA Child Enrichment Center
Young Women's Christian Association of Charleston
201 Donnally Street
Charleston, WV 25301
Contact person: Colleen Walsh
Telephone: 304/340-3561

A combination preschool, day-care, and after-school program, this urban center serves 146 children (aged three months through 12 years) both with and without developmental delays. The Center has been in operation for 18 years. A cornerstone of the transition process is ongoing dialogue with the local Early Intervention programs and schools to meet needs of children, families, and the community.

Child Care Referral Agency

Link Child Care Resource and Referral
River Valley Child Development Services
916 Fifth Avenue, Suite 208
Huntington, WV 25701
Contact person: Cathy Jones Forsythe
Telephone: 304/523-9540 or 800/894-9540

This service to families seeking child care in Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, and Mason counties has operated for one year. In addition to referring parents of children aged birth through 13 or 18 (special needs children) to child-care providers, staff link providers with information, funding, and training.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families. (1993, October, draft report). *The head start-public school transition demonstration: What are we learning?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Administration for Children, Youth, and Families. (n.d.). *Easing the transition from preschool to kindergarten: A guide for early childhood teachers and administrators* (Pamphlet). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Boyer, E. L. (1991). *Ready to learn: A mandate for the nation.* Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8* (expanded edition). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Byrd, R., Rous, B., Stephens, D. Dyk, L., & Perry, E. (1990). *Sequenced transition to education in the public schools: Project STEPS replication manual.* Lexington, KY: Child Development Centers of the Bluegrass, Inc.

Copple, C., Deich, S., Lorelei, B., & Hofferth, S. (1993). *Learning readiness: Promising strategies.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Demarest. E. J., Reisner, E. R., Anderson, L. M., Humphrey, D. C., & Farquhar, E. (1993, September, working paper). *Review of research on achieving the nation's readiness goal: "By the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn".* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families. (1993, March). *Family matters: Annual report to the legislature.* Charleston, WV: Author.

Heaviside, S., Farris, E., & Carpenter, J. (1993). *Public school kindergarten teachers' views on children's readiness for school* (Statistical Analysis Report). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Holmes, C. T. & Mathews, K. M. (1989). The effects of nonpromotion on elementary and junior high school pupils: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research. 54.*

Improving America's Schools Act of 1993, S. 1513, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session.

Kagan, S. L. (1992). The strategic importance of linkages and the transition between early childhood programs and early elementary school. In *Sticking Together: Strengthening Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School* (Summary of a National Policy Forum). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Love, J. M., Logue, M. E., Trudeau, J. V., & Thayer, K. (1992). *Transitions to kindergarten in American schools.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation.

Perroncel, C. B. (1990). *Child care and early education in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia* (Occasional Paper No. 31). Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaboration Network. (1995, work in progress). *Continuity in early childhood: A Framework of home, school, and community linkages*. Washington, DC: Author.

Smith, M. L. & Shepard, L. A. (1989). Flunking grades: A recapitulation. In L. A. Shepard & M. L. Smith (Eds.), *Flunking grades: Research and policies on retention* (pp. 214-236). New York: Falmer Press.

SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education. (1994). *Leadership for collaboration: A training program* (A SERVEing Young Children Project). Greensboro, NC: Author.

Southern Regional Education Board. (1994). *Getting schools ready for children: The other side of the readiness goal*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Education Board. (1992). *Readiness for school: The early childhood challenge*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Stephens, P. (1993). *Early childhood transitions for children with disabilities and their families*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Mid-South Regional Resource Center, Human Development Institute.

Sugarman, J. M. (1991). *Building early childhood systems: A resource handbook*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, Inc.

West Virginia Department of Human Services. (1982). *State of West Virginia licensing requirements for day care centers*. Charleston, WV: Author.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

WVEA-AEL EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITIONS STUDY GROUP PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION FORM

The West Virginia Education Association and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory are cosponsoring a study group of preschool, Head Start, kindergarten, and transition program teachers, administrators, and parents. **Study group members are seeking programs that provide smooth transitions for young children and their families as they move from preschool to school settings.** The Early Childhood Transitions Study Group plans to publish a guide in early fall 1994 that will provide:

- **descriptions of West Virginia early childhood transition programs and practices,**
- **recommendations for establishing and maintaining communications between elementary schools and preschool providers,**
- **contact information for West Virginia providers of technical assistance to those interested in organizing effective transition programs, and**
- **a bibliography of resources.**

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Study group members need information on programs organized by schools, Head Start programs, day care centers, or others that specifically address transitions between preschool and school. **These programs would be characterized as offering stability to children and families while developing connections among service settings when change is necessary. Please take a few moments to note below the program titles or descriptions and contact information for any effective transition program with which you are familiar.** Contact persons of programs listed will be asked to complete a Program Description Form and may receive a follow-up telephone interview prior to selection for inclusion in the guide. Fold, staple, and mail to Jane Hange at AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325. Programs included will receive a copy of the guide and contributors will be cited. **Thank you!**

Your Name _____

Your Title and Address _____

_____

Program Title/Description _____

_____

(Continue on back of this sheet.)

Program Director/Contact Person_____
Address and/or Telephone_____

_____

_____

Program Strengths/Reasons for Recommendation _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Jane Hange, Director
Classroom Instruction Program
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325

Your Name _____
Your Title and Address _____

_____

Program Title/Description _____

_____

Program Director/Contact Person_____
Address and/or Telephone _____

_____

_____

Program Strengths/Reasons for Recommendation _____

_____

Appendix B
WVEA-AEL EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITIONS STUDYGROUP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION FORM

The West Virginia Education Association and the Appalachia Educational Laboratory are co-sponsoring a study group of educators, administrators, and parents who plan to develop a guide to programs and practices designed to aid children and families in transitions between preschool and school settings. **Your program has been identified as providing services that maintain stability for children and families while developing connections among settings when change is necessary (transitions between care, medical, recreations services during the preschool years and/or transition to kindergarten).** Responding to the following questions should take approximately fifteen minutes. **Please attach any information that will help us understand your transition services and mail the completed form by April 18 to Jane Hange, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.**

Programs selected for inclusion may be asked to complete a followup phone interview and will receive a copy of the guide. Thank you for responding. If you have questions or know of others who should be included, please contact Jane Hange, Director, Classroom Instruction Program, AEL, 800/624-9120.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Program_____
School/Agency Name_____
Address_____
School District (if applicable)_____
Contact Person_____
Person Completing this Form_____
Program Phone Number_____
Home Phone of Contact Person (optional)_____
Best Day and Time to Call_____

Program Type or Service Description_____
_____
Program Enrollment_____
Years in Operation_____
Ages Served_____
Program Type Check one or add other.

Church-Affiliated_____ Public School-Based_____
Private_____ Social Service Agency-Based_____
Home-Based_____ Other, please describe.____
_____

Community Served Check one.

Rural_____ Suburban_____ Urban_____

Staff Number_____
Number of Children to Number of Staff Ratio_____
Roles of Adults Involved in the Programs (e.g. teacher, aide, coordinator, case manager, etc.)_____

II. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES FOR TRANSITION PROGRAM

Why did your program begin transition services? What are the objectives or goals of your services?

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, SERVICES, OR PRACTICES

1. Which of the following transition services, if any, does your program include? Check any used and provide further description or list others.

_____ sharing records or portfolios

_____ child visitations to new settings

_____ parent activities

_____ staff exchange visitations/observations

_____ home visits

_____ staff reviews or mini-staffings

_____ parent interviews

_____ child interviews

_____ newsletters

_____ sharing photos of "new" and "old" settings

_____ child contacts between settings (pals, buddies)

_____ bringing something old along into the new setting

_____ pen/picture pals sharing between settings

_____ written plan for transition, shared with staff_____, shared with parents_____

_____ other for children, families, or staff, please describe.

2. Describe any professional development on transition services provided to staff (content, processes, staff participating, number of sessions, followup activities, etc.).

3. What methods are used to gain educator support for the program? How is the program communicated to the public and family support gained?

4. How do you determine when a child is ready for a new setting and what setting might be most appropriate? Who makes this decision? Who initiates the transition process?

5. What records on children are kept and which are transferred as the child progresses?

6. How do you know your program is effective? Describe any evaluation conducted.

7. What has been the greatest accomplishment of your transition program or practices?

8. What was the biggest obstacle to transition program success you had to overcome? How did you avoid or solve it?

9. Please list any resources you found helpful in developing transition services.

10. Please list any recommendations you would make to others planning an early childhood transitions program.

11. Other comments or suggestions.

Thank you for describing your transition activities. **Please mail the form and any attachments by March 31 to Jane Hange, Director, Classroom Instruction Program, AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.** Programs selected for inclusion in the guide will receive a copy and all contributors will be acknowledged.

Appendix C

Early Childhood Transitions
West Virginia Study Group 1993-94

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AEL staff request your assistance in improving services for future study groups by assessing your experience in working in the "Early Childhood Transitions" study group. Please reflect on your reading and experience with early childhood transitions as you respond to the request for recommendations. Your responses will be added to date from the Program Description Forms for the Recommendations section. All responses will be aggregated for analysis and reporting and no identification will be assigned to any statement.

Take a few moments to circle the appropriate ratings on the first sheet and to respond in writing to the questions on the second sheet. Please return this form in the envelope provided.

PART A **Name:** _____

		Agree				Disagree
Evaluation of development of personal knowledge						
1.	The topic of early childhood transitions was worth exploring.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	My knowledge and understanding of the topic have increased.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	The information provided was interesting and worthwhile.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	The quantity of information provided was adequate.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The information learned in the project is useful to me professionally.	5	4	3	2	1
Evaluation as a professional development experience						
1.	My group interaction skills improved	5	4	3	2	1
2.	My research skills (survey development, data analysis, synthesis) improved.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	My writing skills improved.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	My peer editing skills improved.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The study group experience has affected my job performance positively.	5	4	3	2	1

		Agree				Disagree
Evaluation of study group activities						
1.	The goals were clearly defined.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	The goals were met.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	The meetings were rewarding.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	The development of the publication was a worthwhile task.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The tasks undertaken individually between meetings were useful.	5	4	3	2	1
Evaluation of AEL's role in study group facilitation and assistance						
1.	The AEL facilitator enabled the group to define and pursue its direction.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	The facilitator provided adequate communication throughout the process.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	The facilitator provided adequate technical assistance.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	The facilitator scheduled an appropriate number of meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The facilitator encouraged involvement and collaboration.	5	4	3	2	1
Evaluation of my role in the study group						
1.	I felt committed to exploring the issue of early childhood transitions.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	I thought about the issue and discussed it with others between meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	I carefully read the articles and materials provided between meetings.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	I completed all assigned tasks to the best of my ability.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	I approached the study group experience as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.	5	4	3	2	1

Other comments:

WEST VIRGINIA STUDY GROUP REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PART B **Name:**_____

1. How, if at all, has your attitude toward transitions for young children and families changed during your involvement with the study group?

2. What would be your recommendations to those wishing to implement activities or procedures that would ease transitions for young children and families?

3. What recommendations would you make to state-level policymakers (legislature, state department of education, school boards, education associations) regarding assistance for early childhood transitions?

4. Through your reading, development and analysis of survey data, writing and editing, and other study group experience, what have you learned about conducting research?

5. In what ways, if any, have you found participation in the study group to be professionally rewarding? What strengths and weaknesses would you identify about the group's work?

6. How do you plan to use what you have learned from the study group experience?

7. How could AEL's and WVEA's assistance to the study group be improved?

8. Dissemination of the products of every study group is important to AEL and WVEA. Please suggest ways in which you can share your group's product or the knowledge gained from study group experience with others. How might AEL or WVEA assist you in doing this?

9. What activities do you think AEL or WVEA should pursue as a followup to the document with regard to disseminating information, maintaining an information file(s), or providing technical assistance to those interested in early childhood transitions?

Thank you for completing and returning this form and improving AEL and WVEA assistance to future study groups.

Appendix D

Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework of Home, School, and Community Linkages

The following essential elements of effective transition services are adapted with permission from Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework of Home, School, and Community Linkages (1995), originally released by the Regional Educational Laboratories Early Childhood Collaboration Network in fall 1993 as Continuity in Early Childhood: Elements and Indicators of Home, School, and Community Linkages. This document defines a framework for linking services for young children and their families. The concept of a continuum of services is central. When service providers link together to provide continuity, they establish smooth transitions. Continuity allows children and their families to build on the positive, supportive aspects of their experience as they make transitions. In other words, transitions become part of the ongoing experience of families, as opposed to being an interruption or an abrupt change that results in difficult adjustments.

The framework consists of eight essential elements described with exemplary practices below. The framework can be used to :

- Become better informed about the various factors to consider when designing and linking early childhood and early learning services.
- Engage in self-study and assess community needs; in particular, to identify gaps in services or potential linkages between care/education programs or services.
- Guide the planning or development of specific policies, programs, and practices that promote continuity for young children and their families.
- Assess progress as communities seek to implement a service continuum for young children and their families.

Eight Elements and Exemplary Practices

1. Family, school, and community partners sharing leadership and responsibility for decision making.

Exemplary practices include: continual focus on children and families, a leadership team that is representative of all partner, collaboration and consensus characterize the leadership team, written policies support leadership decision making, and roles are clearly defined and training provided.

2. A continuum of family-focused, comprehensive, integrated services.

Exemplary practices include: formal agreements exist regarding comprehensive and integrated approaches to meeting family needs; all children have access to appropriate levels of comprehensive and integrated services; families are partners in planning and selecting services; a system exists to inform educators of services of families and ways to assist; and a "single point of entry" system exists to connect families to services.

3. Policies, programs, and practices that demonstrate the education, involvement, and empowerment of families.

Exemplary practices include: information sharing is two-way between schools and families regarding their child's progress and service opportunities; families are viewed as partners and have opportunities for training and support services; families are involved in planning and implementing activities and participate extensively; and policies, programs, and practices indicate a valuing of families.

4. Policies, programs, and practices which demonstrate a sensitivity to the culture and language of children and their families.

Exemplary practices include: written policies support the use of a child's home culture and language; instruction is primarily in the home language with English introduced; communications are conducted in the family's language and occurs in comfortable contexts for them; home culture and language are visible in the school; culturally appropriate interactions and learning styles are integrated; and professional development for educators routinely addresses issues of culture and language.

5. Communication among all adults who are responsible for the children's care and education.

Exemplary practices include: staff and families use a variety of means for ongoing communication; staff within service setting meet regularly to maintain ongoing communication; all adults responsible for care/education of children routinely visit one another's settings, philosophies, and scopes of service; a system ensures ongoing documentation of child and family needs and all relevant records are transferred with the child; children have many opportunities to meet new staff and visit new programs/settings prior to changes; and families and staff work together to plan and implement visits and activities to support children.

6. A coordinated approach to staff development across agencies to enhance implementation of home, school, and community linkages.

Exemplary practices include: coordinated policies exist across agencies that support ongoing staff development across age levels and among home, school, and community partners; joint planning guides the process; joint staff development is ongoing across age levels and agencies; sessions allow for active participation in a variety of learning experiences with followup support consistently provided; training activities build on one another and are designed to enhance the partners' capability to aid continuity; and systemic assessment is jointly planned, implemented, analyzed, and results shared with all partners, decision makers, and the community.

7. A developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Exemplary practices include: children explore a learning environment rich with manipulative materials and are actively engaged in problem solving and learning; children usually work in individually or in groups; the learning environment is organized into activity areas with appropriate materials that do not interfere with each other; children participate in whole and small group activities and have approximately 1/2 the day to pursue active exploration of self-selected materials and pursuits; adult-directed activities are thematic allowing integrated learning and skill application; teachers use primarily authentic assessment and children and parents assist in documenting student progress; assessment outcomes are used to plan curriculum and instruction; policies discourage retention or special placement of primary grade children and ensure progress in heterogeneous group with personalized attention; and developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are consistently addressed by staff who have regular opportunities to study and apply research and practice findings.

8. Documentation and reporting of outcomes which are used to refine and/or expand linkages (p. 6).

Exemplary practices include: a formal reporting procedure is used to regularly share documentation of progress with home, school, and community partners who participate in documentation; home, school, and community partners regularly conduct self-assessments and data analyses and revise work accordingly; associated organizations have policies that support joint evaluation activities; evaluation reports are regularly disseminated to decision makers and the community with followup meetings conducted to gather feedback on service continuity; and staff development is provided to all partners to ensure common understanding of evaluation activities.

Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Product Quality Evaluation Form
"Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change"

A. Background

1. Name: _____

2. School/District: _____

3. Position: _____

4. State: _____

B. Rating

This form asks you to evaluate this product on a series of product quality scales. Please mark your response to each item with an "X" at any point along the scale. If you cannot reply to any scale, please check the "Cannot Reply" option for that item.

1. How clearly presented was the information in this material? ___Cannot Reply

Difficult Very easy

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

2. How credible was the information in this material? ___Cannot Reply

Difficult Very easy

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

3. How useful was the information in this material? ___Cannot Reply

Difficult Very easy

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

4. How easy was it for you to get this material? ___Cannot Reply

Difficult Very easy

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

5. Which sections of the report have you found helpful? Please explain briefly how these sections helped you.

6. Have you shared your copy with other educators? ____ yes ____no
If so, how many? ____

7. In what ways have you used this product? (Check any that apply.)

___ Personal professional development
___ Used in teaching
___ Quoted in a report
___ Others, please describe

___ Used in a meeting/presentation
___ Quoted in a newsletter/publication
(Title: _____)
___ Used to develop/revise program or curriculum

8. How did you learn of the availability of this report?

9. Other suggestions or comments regarding this product:

Thank you for completing this evaluation/contribution form.
Please fold, staple, stamp, and mail to AEL.

Affix
Postage
Here

AEL
P. O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**
Office of Human Development Services
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten

A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators

54
PS 023019

Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten

A Guide for Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators

If you have ever made a move from one location to another or separated from friends, you know how hard a transition can be. Going from a known, comfortable environment to one that is different and unfamiliar can be very stressful. This is often how young children feel as they move from preschool to kindergarten.[1] The purpose of this booklet is to help educators ease this transition.

Acknowledgements

In the Spring of 1986, Dodie Livingston, Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Human Development Services, Department of Health and Human Services announced the *National Initiative on Transition from Preschool to Elementary School.* This initiative has led to the development of this publication.

The *Advisory Group* which is responsible for its content includes:

Sue Bredekamp
Director, National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, National Association for the Education of Young Children
Washington, D.C.

Judith Dighe
Teacher Specialist, Head Start
Montgomery County Public Schools
Montgomery County, Maryland

Harriet A. Egertson
Consultant, Early Childhood Education
Nebraska Department of Education
Lincoln, Nebraska

Tynette W. Hills
Education Program Specialist
New Jersey Department of Education
Trenton, New Jersey

Joan Lombardi (Editor)
Early Childhood Specialist and Consultant to the Head Start Bureau
Washington, D.C.

Sadie Poinsett
Kindergarten Teacher
Montgomery County Schools
Montgomery County, Maryland

Hector Sanchez
Bilingual Multicultural Specialist
Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Washington, D.C.

Anne R. Sanford
Director
Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Abbye Sheltzer
Kindergarten Teacher
Montgomery County Public Schools
Montgomery County, Maryland

E. Dollie Wolverton, (Project Director)
Chief, Education Services Branch
Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Washington, D.C.

Contents

Introduction 1

Benefits Of Facilitating Transition 3

Keys To Successful Transition 4

Providing Program Continuity Through Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum For Preschool And Kindergarten Children 5

Maintaining Ongoing Communication And Cooperation Between Preschool And Kindergarten Staff 10

Preparing Children For The Transition 15

Involving Parents In The Transition 18

Summary 22

References 24

Introduction

Increasing numbers of young children today are participating in early childhood programs prior to enrollment in kindergarten. For many young children, the kindergarten teacher is not the "first teacher" and the kindergarten class is not the first group experience.[2]

For young children, the transition from preschool to kindergarten may be met with a mixture of delight and concern. On the one hand, there is the pleasure of accomplishment as they move on to something new. On the other hand, there may be some anxiety over leaving friends and teachers that they know and love, for something less familiar.[3]

For parents, there is the pride that comes with seeing their child grow to meet new challenges, yet there is also a concern for how their child will cope with the change and what this situation may bring to their role as parents.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For the preschool teacher, the transition means saying good-by to children to whom they have grown attached, with the hope that what has been gained will provide a foundation for continued growth. For the kindergarten teacher, it means saying hello to a diverse group of children, with the hope that the new program will build upon earlier experiences.[4]

Because we know that learning is a continuous process, the transition from preschool to kindergarten is important for all those who educate and care for young children. Preschools and kindergartens are important influences in children's lives. Programs in prekindergarten classes, nursery schools, child care centers, Head Start, and family day care homes should be built on the growth taking place in the first years of the child's life. In turn, kindergarten programs should be built on the learning and development that have taken place in the home and through earlier educational experience.[5]

The influence of the family upon the child remains fundamental throughout these early years. It is important to link subsequent steps in the child's education to their earlier experiences and to involve the parents in these activities.[6]

This booklet provides a variety of ideas for preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators, as they work cooperatively to establish linkages and ease the transition between educational settings for young children and their families. If you are an administrator in either setting, you play a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of these ideas with the teaching staff. Your leadership can make a significant difference in helping teachers find time to focus on the transition process. If you are a preschool or kindergarten teacher, you may want to share this booklet with your program director or principal in order to gain their support for these ideas.

Some programs may have already established procedures for transition. For such programs, these suggestions can serve to renew and expand current practices. In programs that have not yet addressed the issues of transition, one or more of the ideas presented can be adopted to meet particular needs. No matter where your program stands, the critical goal is to take a new step forward in promoting success for children and families as they move on to new early childhood experiences.

60

Benefits of Facilitating Transition[7]

When early childhood educators take the time to help facilitate transition, there are benefits for children, parents, and teachers.

For Children

When preschool and kindergarten teachers help children move more easily into a new environment, the results for the children may include:

- continuity with earlier educational experiences;
- increased motivation and openness to new experiences;
- enhanced self-confidence;
- improved relations with other children and adults; and,
- a greater sense of trust between teachers and children.

For Parents

If parents are involved with teachers in providing a smooth transition for their children, the parents gain:

- increased confidence in their children's ability to achieve in the new setting;
- improved self-confidence in their own ability to communicate with educational staff and to effectively influence the educational system;
- a sense of pride and commitment in their ongoing involvement in the education of their children; and,
- a greater knowledge and appreciation of early childhood programs and staff.

61

Teachers who cooperate with others to ease the children's transition between educational programs can expect:

- increased knowledge of the children and an enhanced ability to meet individual needs;
- increased parental and community support;
- more resources and a larger network of professional support;
- increased awareness of the preschool or kindergarten programs in the community; and,
- a renewed sense of professionalism and pride in their efforts to reach out to young children and their families.

Keys to Successful Transition

There are four critical elements or keys to the successful transition of young children and families as they move from preschool to kindergarten. Educational staff in both settings can facilitate transition by:

- **providing program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula for preschool and kindergarten children;**
- **maintaining ongoing communication and cooperation between preschool and kindergarten staff;**
- **preparing children for the transition; and,**
- **involving parents in the transition.**

By focusing attention on each one of these important aspects of the transition process, early childhood educators build a more continuous educational experience for young children and their families.

Providing Program Continuity Through Developmentally Appropriate Curricula for Preschool and Kindergarten Children

The move from preschool to kindergarten is made easier if each program is focused on the individual developmental needs of the children. Preschool and kindergarten may be operating in different types of settings with children who are different ages. However, the commonalities between the way four- and five-year-old children learn and the range of developmental levels represented in each program call for similar learning environments and teaching strategies. As discussed below, the transition between programs is facilitated by the degree to which each program is developmentally appropriate.

How does providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum in both preschool and kindergarten facilitate the transition between programs?

Developmentally appropriate programs provide for a wider range of developmental interests and abilities than the chronological age range of the group suggests. Since each child is a unique person with an individual personality, learning style, and family background, both preschool and kindergarten teachers need to be responsive to these individual differences.[8]

Moving to kindergarten will usually mean that a child will enter a new setting. However, if both programs are developmentally appropriate, children will be more likely to find similar activities which will allow them to begin their kindergarten experiences confident that they have the ability to accomplish certain tasks. Knowing what is expected adds to the children's self-confidence, encourages their attempts to try new activities, and facilitates continuity in their development.

What do preschool and kindergarten children have in common?

Both preschool and kindergarten children learn best by:[9]

- actively exploring their environment;
- interacting with adults and other children;
- using concrete materials and participating in activities that are relevant to their own experiences and culture; and,
- building upon their natural curiosity and desire to make sense of the world around them.

Both preschool and kindergarten children are continuously learning to:[10]

- use their bodies and express themselves through physical activities;
- solve problems and experiment with change;
- develop an understanding and acceptance of themselves as individuals;
- gain more self control and build cooperative relations with others; and
- communicate their thoughts and feelings as effectively and creatively as possible.

What is the significance of these common characteristics for planning developmentally appropriate curricula for preschool and kindergarten?

Preschool and kindergarten children have similar learning styles. Furthermore, each program has children with a wide range of developmental levels. For these reasons both preschool and kindergarten teachers may establish similar environments and approaches to facilitating growth and development. For example, preschool and kindergarten teachers can adopt the following developmentally appropriate practices:[11]

- designing experiences to stimulate learning in all areas — physical, social, emotional, and intellectual;
- planning curriculum and adult interactions which are responsive to individual differences in ability, interests, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic styles;
- providing an environment in which children can learn through active exploration and interaction with concrete materials, adults, and other children;
- organizing that environment so that children select many of their own activities among a variety of learning areas including: dramatic play, blocks, science, math, games and puzzles, books, recordings, art, and music;
- organizing the day so that children work individually or in small informal groups most of the time;
- providing many opportunities for children to see how spoken and written language are related;
- providing daily opportunities for children to use small and large muscles, to listen to stories, and to express themselves creatively;
- facilitating the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, setting clear limits, and redirecting children to a more acceptable activity; and,
- providing many opportunities for children to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, sharing, negotiating, and talking with others to solve interpersonal problems.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In what ways are preschool and kindergarten children different?

Although both preschool and kindergarten programs may have children at various developmental levels, most kindergarten children are one year older. Because this extra year has brought new experiences and natural growth, kindergarten children:[12]

- are more able to expand beyond their immediate experiences of self, home, and family and to develop interests in the community and world outside;
- show increased ability to use motor skills, to pay attention for longer periods of time, and to play and plan cooperatively; and,
- display a growing interest in symbols including written language and a written number system.

What is the significance of these differences in planning developmentally appropriate curriculum?

Although the preschool and kindergarten room may look similar, the kindergarten teacher is able to:[13]

- provide more elaboration in the children's interaction with materials and activities;
- encourage more joint planning and cooperation among children;
- provide an environment which puts more emphasis on stimulating written language and literacy skills which are appropriate to the individual child's developmental level and ability; and,
- focus on the development of more independent work habits and enhanced ability to follow teacher directions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

What other differences exist between preschool and kindergarten programs?

The settings of preschools and kindergartens are often different. For example:[14]

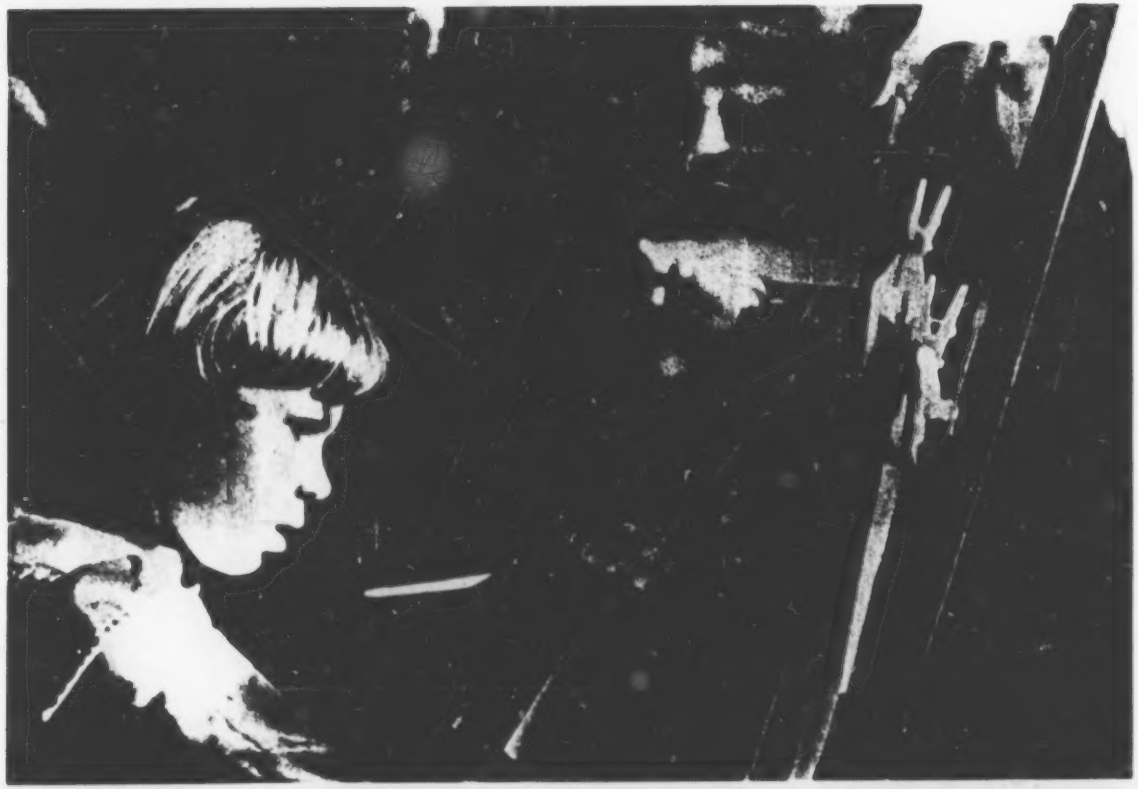
- Group size in preschool may be relatively small — 15-20 in center-based programs, with 2-3 teaching staff, or even smaller in home-based programs. In kindergarten, there may be 25 (or more) children, with 1-2 teaching staff.
- Preschool schedules may be flexible, whereas kindergartens may be required to adhere to a time schedule based in part on cooperative uses of playgrounds, cafeterias, gyms, or buses.
- Preschools may be smaller and more community based, whereas kindergartens are usually part of a larger institution with older children and different educational expectations.
- Preschools may be privately administered or cooperatively administered by parents, while kindergartens are usually part of a school system most often administered by a local board of education.

Although each program can provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum, the setting may effect the way each program is carried out.

Maintaining Ongoing Communication Between Preschool and Kindergarten Staff

Administrators in both preschool and kindergartens can set the stage for successful transition activities by supporting the ongoing communication and cooperation among early childhood teachers. Preschool and kindergarten staff can increase educational program continuity by getting to know each other, sharing information about their programs, and planning an effective transition system. Opportunities for communication and cooperation should occur throughout the program year. Communication can be enhanced when those involved are familiar and comfortable with each other. If opportunities are provided for participants to ask questions and provide information about themselves and their programs in an open atmosphere, the foundation is laid for effective cooperation during the transition.[15]

One of the simplest yet most important needs is for accurate and unbiased information about programs. Most teachers of preschool children are understandably proud of their programs and they have a professional and personal interest in the young children enrolled. It may be difficult to "let them go" to what may seem like a more impersonal institutional setting. On the other hand, most kindergarten teachers, equally proud and dedicated, strive to plan and carry out an educational program based on community expectations, school goals and objectives, and the children's individual needs. Although preschool and kindergarten teachers may have had different career paths, honest acceptance of each other's professionalism and commitment is essential to the transition process.[16]



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Most preschool and kindergarten teachers have limited time outside of the classroom. However, opportunities for formal and informal contact should be provided throughout the year. Since preschool teachers may have to interact with several "receiver" schools and kindergarten teachers may have to contact several "feeder" programs, it may be helpful to establish a community-wide transition committee in order to involve all the relevant programs in planning transition activities.

The following tips include suggestions that may help early childhood educators begin the exchange between programs in a way that builds mutual respect and understanding.

Tips for Ongoing Communication Between Preschool and Kindergarten Staff[7]

- Preschool and kindergarten administrators can initate opportunities for communication and exchange among teachers in order to begin planning for the transition.
- Administrators and teachers can plan an informal visit to meet the staff of the preschool or kindergarten program. During this visit, staff can begin to get to know each other, share information about the program, and discuss the need for specific transition activities and other collaborative efforts.
- In communities with a number of preschools and kindergartens, a community-wide transition committee can be organized with representatives from preschools, public schools, parents, and other community organizations. Both preschool and public school administrators can be instrumental in establishing the committee. Such committees can be responsible for developing a step-by-step plan and corresponding materials to be used in the transition process by all programs.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Through informal contact, or through the transition committee, activities can be planned including joint kindergarten registration, workshops and materials for parents, and other activities that will facilitate the transition process.
- An open house can be held for kindergarten or preschool staff to explain the program and get acquainted. Slides of children can be used to illustrate the daily program. Written material about the program can be provided.
- Teachers can visit each other's classrooms during the school year to observe. Some programs may be able to exchange staff as substitutes on occasion.
- Participation on policy advisory committees can be combined where possible. For example, you might ask the kindergarten teacher to sit on the preschool board or invite a preschool teacher to join in meetings of the school PTA.
- Exchange days can be planned between preschool and kindergarten staff.

- Joint inservice workshops can be developed which focus on transition as well as other issues facing early childhood educators.
- Preschool administrators can write letters to receiving public schools in the spring listing the names of incoming children and communicating information about their preschool program.
- Kindergarten registration can be planned in conjunction with preschool programs.
- If kindergarten children are screened prior to entrance, the screening can be planned in conjunction with the preschool. Preschool staff, who are familiar with the children, can be present during the screening. In this way, they may be able to reassure an anxious child and increase the effectiveness of the procedure. Preschools can also offer to "host" the screening, so that children remain in a familiar environment during this process.
- Health and social service staff can meet to discuss continuity of services for children and families.
- Arrangements can be made between preschool and kindergarten staff to provide special information and assistance for non-English speaking parents as their children move on to a new program.
- Preschool staff can discuss the transfer of specific records to the school. The type of records available will vary. Some programs, such as Head Start or programs serving special needs children, may already have specific arrangements for the transfer or records. The most important concern in this area is to provide parents with their full rights to privacy regarding the records of their children.
- Once children move on to kindergarten, follow-up discussions can be held in the fall to answer questions and discuss the progress of children.

Preparing Children for Transition

Never before has early education reached as many children as it does today. Children entering kindergarten may have attended full day or half day child care for one or more years. This group experience may have followed years of home based care with a parent, relative, or other caregiver. Because of the variety of programs available, children can enter kindergarten with vastly different experiences. In turn, kindergarten programs are diverse in purpose, structure, and schedule.[18]

Despite the variety of previous experiences, all children need to be accepted at their own developmental level. Preparing children for the transition to kindergarten does not mean "getting them ready" by focusing on a narrow range of academic skills, drilling on new rules, or retaining them in preschool for another year. School is a place where children and parents expect to find opportunities for growth and development from whatever starting point the child brings to the new setting.[19]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Children need to know what is expected of them by adults in the new program and to have several opportunities to become familiar with the new environment. They should look forward to the new experience with a sense of excitement and anticipation rather than feeling threatened and fearful of what lies ahead. Transition activities for young children should be like those which prepare them for anything new and can include discussions, stories, games, dramatic play, and field trips.

The following tips include suggestions for preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators to help plan and implement transition activities for children.

Tips for Preschool Staff in Planning Transition Activities for Children[20]

- Schedule a visit or a series of visits to the new school for the children. These visits can include a tour of the building and playground, eating lunch in the cafeteria, and/or participating in activities in the kindergarten classroom. Take pictures or videos of these activities to share with children and parents.
- Help the children feel comfortable and confident about the move to kindergarten by discussing the new activities, schedules, and bus routes.
- Read books to the children that discuss changes and moves. Create a puppet show or scrapbook with pictures of the new school. Allow children to express their feelings about the new school through dramatic play activities and by dictating stories. Encourage children to ask questions.
- If the kindergarten program has different rules (such as lining up to go on the bus), the preschool teacher may want to play games with the children to familiarize them with the new procedures. However, avoid drilling them or creating anxiety about the new environment.

- Invite a kindergarten child or older sibling to visit the preschool and talk about his/her school.
- Make a calendar to highlight important events such as visits to the school, good-by party, first day of school, etc.

Tips for Kindergarten Staff in Planning Transition Activities for Children

- Invite parents to visit the school with their child during the school year before the child begins kindergarten.
- Hold a back-to-school night in August so that parents and children can visit the classroom, take part in sample activities, and meet other children and parents in the new group.
- Send a personal "letter from your teacher" or postcard to all new students in the late summer, welcoming them to the kindergarten class. The school PTA might be contacted to provide resources for materials and postage.
- Plan to phase in groups of children during the first week of school in order to provide more individual attention to each child. The teacher may want to have children come with their parents for an hour the first day, in three different groups, or spend two to three days orienting five to ten children a day. Focusing on small groups of children during this initial period can promote a smoother transition for each child.

Involving Parents in the Transition

A joint effort by school and home is needed to affect a smooth transition. This means that continuity is important for the parents as well as the children. For the parent, the preschool may be a familiar family support system where there has been frequent contact with the teaching staff. The kindergarten may represent a less familiar environment with a different type of program for children and families.

Many parents are actively involved in their children's preschool program. Studies indicate that such involvement contributes to the success of the educational program. Parents need encouragement to continue to be involved in the educational program and to help their children feel competent as they move on to kindergarten. Parents can promote confidence in their children by conveying a positive attitude about the new school.

Parents also need support to work through the effect of changing programs on their daily lives. For example, locating child care that can be used in conjunction with the kindergarten may be a critical need for some families.

As parents become more familiar with the new setting and meet other parents in their children's peer group, they gain confidence in their own power to have an effect on the education of their children.

The following tips include suggestions for preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators in planning and implementing transition activities with parents.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

7C

Tips for Preschool Staff to Involve Parents in the Transition[21]

- Provide parents with information about the school their child may be attending including: address, name of principal, telephone number, and dates for registration.
- Encourage parents to attend kindergarten "round-up" or other orientation sessions that the school may plan for incoming parents.
- Discuss child care options with working parents. Provide information and referral to appropriate after school programs.
- Invite school personnel, including teachers and principals, to attend a parent meeting and discuss the kindergarten program, the role of parents in the school, and to answer any other questions regarding the school program.
- Discuss the transfer of records with parents and provide release of information forms to be signed by the parents. Such forms should include details on "who" is releasing "what" information "to whom" and for "what purpose."
- Help arrange a visit for the parent and child to the new school.
- Create a story about the new school for parents to read to their children. Encourage parents to build their child's confidence about going to school.
- Introduce parents to other parents of children who will attend the new program. Encourage meetings of new classmates prior to school opening.
- Discuss changes in services for parents that may not be available in the public school. For example, some preschools, especially Head Start programs, may help parents with health appointments and transportation. This type of service may not be available in the new program.

Tips for Kindergarten Staff to Involve Parents in the Transition[22]

- In the spring, invite new parents to a general orientation about the new school and the opportunities for parent participation.
- Encourage parents to volunteer in the kindergarten classroom prior to September.
- Provide a parent orientation package including: the child's new schedule, transportation procedures, required school forms, food service, and other program information.
- Send notes to parents prior to school opening which encourage parent involvement and offer suggestions for helping children feel at home more quickly during the first few days of school. The letter may include tips on what parents might say to their children to ease anxiety about the first day, a description of the activities planned during the initial weeks, suggestions for comfortable apparel, and bus schedules.
- Introduce new parents to parents of children already in kindergarten. The PTA may be helpful in establishing such a "buddy system" between "old" and "new" parents.

Summary

Planning for the transition of children as they move from preschool to kindergarten provides continuity in their early educational experiences. The transition is made easier when both programs are developmentally appropriate and respond to the individual needs of each child.

Ongoing communication and cooperation between preschool and kindergarten staff leads to a greater understanding of each other's program and an increased ability to plan together for the transition.

When children are prepared for making the transition to a new program, they gain self confidence and are more likely to succeed. When parents are included in the transition process, it renews their sense of involvement in their child's education.

As preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators plan and implement the ideas presented in this booklet, they will be helping to provide a more coordinated educational experience for young children and their families.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

1. Adapted from "Rap Reach-Transitioning," by the Resource Access Project, KMUC, April, 1986, p. 5.
2. Adapted from "Easing the Child's Transition Between Home, Child Care Center and School: A Guide for Early Childhood Educators," by Kathryn Glicksman and Tynette W. Hills, published by The New Jersey Department of Education, September, 1981, p. 1.
3. Adapted from "Transition from Preschool to Public School," a slide/tape presentation developed by The Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project, Chapel Hill, North Carolina and the National Interagency Committee on Transition, 1986.
4. ibid.
5. Adapted from Glicksman and Hills, op. cit., p. 1.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., p. 13.
8. Adapted from Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Edited by Sue Bredekamp, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1986, pp. 4 and 2.
9. ibid. pp. 50-52.
10. ibid.
11. ibid.
12. ibid., p. 6.
13. ibid.
14. Adapted from Glicksman and Hills, op. cit., p. 3.
15. ibid., p. 11
16. ibid.
17. ibid., pp. 9-11.
18. ibid., pp. 1 and 3.
19. Adapted from "Come as You Are — Kindergarten for Nebraska's Children," a booklet issued by the Nebraska State Department of Education, March, 1984.
20. Adapted from Resource Access Project, op. cit., pp. 2-4.
21. ibid.
22. Adapted from Glicksman and Hills, op. cit., p. 11.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE